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Black Sails on the Mediascape: Towards an Anarchist Theory of News Media and Media-Movement Interactions

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Black Sails on the Mediascape: Towards an Anarchist Theory of News Media and Media-Movement Interactions

by

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Dedication

For Breanna.

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A note on the text: I presented a rough version of Chapter 3 as a paper for the 2010 Union for Democratic Communications conference at Penn State. It did not play well with the crowd, and I am thankful to Deepa Kumar for her encouraging words afterward. Some material in Chapters 3, 4, and 5 began life as seminar papers in classes taught by Harry Cleaver, Dominic Lasorsa, Laura Stein, Mark Tremayne, and Michael Young. A revised and extended portion of my interview with scott crow appears as a chapter in *Emergency Hearts, Molotov Dreams: A scott crow Reader* (2015, pp. 107-121). However, most of the original research and writing in this dissertation has not been published or presented previously.

I claim sole responsibility for the contents of this study, including the information it conveys, the analysis it presents, conclusions drawn, opinions expressed, and any errors in fact or judgment it may contain.

Black Sails on the Mediascape: Towards an Anarchist Theory of News Media and Media-Movement Interactions

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2015

Supervisor: Russell Todd

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This dissertation provides an anarchist account of news media power and interactions between news media and social movement actors, by drawing on anarchist thought and practice, as well as theoretical traditions such as libertarian Marxism, critical media studies, science and technology studies, and social movement studies in sociology. Notable features of anarchist media theory include: a critique of communications technology and corruptions of information power; a critique of mass news media's corporate hierarchical structure; and a premium placed on communications practices and media that enable non-hierarchical forms of communication, as well as on widespread participation in the process of meaning making. This qualitative theory building and research, which addresses a glaring gap in anarchist literature about media, is rooted firmly in anarchism's rejection of authority and oppression, its commitment to liberty and autonomy, and its understanding of prefigurative politics as a form of direct action.

Anarchism also brings its ethical-political commitments to bear on communications research, by challenging the administrative/critical researcher binary, questioning state-centric research perspectives, and calling on scholars to engage in activist research that could benefit activists and social movement actors. In addition,

anarchism provides a theoretical basis for assessing established critical media theories according to their strategic or tactical implications for activists and other social movement actors, not simply according to how well these theoretical perspectives capture or explain different aspects of social-political reality. Moreover, unlike classical or orthodox Marxist theoretical perspectives, anarchism rejects vanguardism—the strategic principle that a small but dedicated group of class-conscious revolutionaries bear primary responsibility for fomenting social change—as well as the belief that capturing state power is indispensable to social transformation. An anarchist account of news media and media-movement interactions thus problematizes critical media theories such as framing, hegemony, and political economy, which proffer state-centric analyses and strategic implications.

Besides promoting theoretical arguments, this study features an original research component consisting of in-depth, ethnographic interviews with activists based in Austin, Texas. The findings from this exploratory interview research suggest that some of the major theoretical arguments contained in this dissertation accurately reflect how some anarchists think about news media.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Lines of Inquiry

This dissertation attempts to show what anarchist thought and practice "bring to the table," so to speak, in a scholarly, activist examination of critical communications theories, media research practices, social movement tactics and strategy, and contemporary activists' beliefs about news media. Broad in scope, it addresses questions which have gnawed at me over the past several years, first as an activist media maker involved in diverse left-progressive groups and causes, then later as a communications graduate student working at a "tier 1" research university. As a work of activist scholarship, this study aims to present ideas of possible interest to those who participate in oppositional movements and causes. As a work of academic scholarship, it focuses attention on undertheorized aspects of the interrelationships among mainstream news media, activist and/or alternative media, and oppositional groups and social movements.

Indicative of the settings in which its chapters incubated, two wellsprings of theory and research ground this work: critical communications studies and anarchism. Although their concerns overlap to some extent, the former is mainly a product of institutionally embedded, subsidized professional researchers, whereas the latter represents an organic expression of revolutionary, anti-authoritarian thought and practice. With a foot in both worlds, this raises a hard question: Should one study anarchist groups, practices, and theory by using an established critical communications paradigm, or would it be better to examine media-movement interactions and critical media theories through the optic of anarchist thought and practice? In other words, which body of ideas—critical communications theory or anarchism—ought to frame or situate this study?

Of course, neither approach is "correct" in any meaningful sense; they simply interpret one another in divergent ways. Applying critical media theories—such as

political economy, cultural hegemony, critical race theory, and feminism—to study the communicative activity of anarchists may shine light on tactics and strategies that could benefit other dissidents and activists. This research approach would be similar to Charlotte Ryan's (1991), for example, whose book *Prime Time Activism* usefully connects academic media theories to their implications for activist strategy. However, I chose to frame this study within anarchism, and have endeavored to craft anarchistic arguments about news media, for three reasons. First, theorizing about news media from an anarchist point of view helps to fill a gap in anarchist literature about one of society's major political institutions. Second, although anarchists are few in number, their ideas resonate widely within left-progressive and anti-authoritarian/anti-capitalist circles. Applying anarchist insights about power and liberation to news media—or any other important dimension of social-political life—can help to extend anarchism's influence. Third, examining media through an anarchist lens arguably is more interesting to activists and dissidents than are efforts to bend or recast anarchism in order to assimilate it into existing academic frameworks, which various strands of "post-anarchism" attempt (e.g., Call 2002; May 1994; Newman 2001; Rousselle & Evren 2011). In any case, this study is better viewed as an anarchist work on media power, media-movement interactions, and related matters, rather than as a communications work on anarchism or anarchists.

Of course, the terms 'anarchy', 'anarchist', and 'anarchism' are contentious, even among readers familiar with radical political movements. Briefly, by *anarchism* I mean a revolutionary anti-authoritarian, anti-capitalist political theory, culture, and movement, which rejects all forms of domination and values freedom and equality in every sphere of human activity. Anarchism encompasses several different tendencies, including anarcho-communism, anarcho-syndicalism, mutualism, collectivism, anarcha-feminism, primitivism, individualist anarchism, and dozens of other schools of thought (Gordon

2006; 2008; Guérin 1970; 1980/2005; Marshall 1992/2010). But it is also much more than this, as anarchism is notable for its diversity and resistance to ideological closure. It is as much a body of specific ideas and practices as it is a spirit or attitude about how people should live and approach questions dealing with economic, cultural, and/or social-political transformation. As Paul Rabin (1988), writing for the British anarchist quarterly *The Raven*, observes:

> Anarchism has manifested itself in a variety of organisations and theories. But anarchy itself is not a specific theory or form of organisation. It is a spirit which can find expression, to a greater or lesser extent, in theories and organisations. Anarchy is not complete or consistent or definite.
>
> To analyse anarchy is necessarily to inflict injury upon it. Anarchy can not be captured in any formulation. Anarchy is metaphysically primitive. The substance of anarchy can only be understood intuitively. The form which this understanding takes is as a distinction between those forms of human life which support anarchy and those which are hostile to it (pp. 323-4).

Taking Rabin's comments to heart, I must emphasize that the view of anarchism presented in this work is my own, and might be described as "anarchism without adjectives," even though it draws inspiration from writers who represent different tendencies within the anarchist tradition. Idiosyncrasy is unavoidable when writers tackle the subject of anarchism, but anarchist writers can inform readers of their personal biases. My views are a product of long involvement in radical left groups and causes, working alongside anarchists, Marxists, and progressives from various backgrounds, immersing myself in hundreds of books and articles about anarchists and their ideas, and allowing new information, experience, and reflection to reshape my views – all the while as someone whose political core is anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian. I must also reiterate that this dissertation does not focus primarily on the activities and writings of anarchist groups and activists. Rather, it strives to explore how the ideas of this particular political

tradition can provide insight into critical media theories and activist strategies, as well as highlight related concerns of significance to leftists, progressives, and radical anti-capitalists. In other words, this dissertation is concerned with what anarchist ideas and practices, but not necessarily anarchist activists, groups, and movements, can tell us about news media power and media-movement interactions.

THEORY BUILDING APPROACH

Academic works on journalism and media often proceed formulaically, moving step-by-step through introductions and literature reviews, theoretical considerations, research questions or hypotheses, and methodological breakdowns, before finally presenting and discussing research findings. Indeed, the process has become so standardized that several writers offer detailed, step-by-step instructions on how to produce and publish academic communications research (e.g., Alexander & Potter 2001; Belcher 2009; Knapp & Daly 2014; Poindexter & McCombs 2000). This approach is the norm for contemporary Western social science scholarship, which purports to apply scientific methods in pursuit of neatly packaged, objective truths. Against this tradition and in the spirit of anarchism, this study adopts a qualitatively untidy, non-objective, non-linear, anti-elite, purposely political approach.

Unlike most other qualitative studies, in which researchers begin with theoretical frameworks in order to build upon, verify, or challenge established perspectives, this dissertation is not preoccupied with testing or applying anarchist media theory. Instead, its main concern is to show how anarchist media theory *could be constructed*, as well as demonstrate how an anarchist account of news media differs from other, established critical media perspectives and research approaches. To do so, it provides an account of

anarchism and anarchist principles, and then brings these to bear on academic literature in order to reframe important issues in journalism and mass communications research from an anarchist perspective.

This approach may unsettle readers with prevailing expectations for journalism and communications research, who perhaps view this dissertation's theory building project as something like an extended literature review. There are important counterpoints to be raised here. First, this work develops a series of interrelated, expressly political arguments about news media power, media-movement interactions, and the study thereof; this is not the same thing as a literature review. This dissertation has commonalities with grounded theory approaches, which seek to discover theoretical concepts inductively, as opposed to verifying preexisting ones (Charmaz 2014; Corbin & Strauss 2008; Glaser & Strauss 1967; Martin 2010). Indeed, there are notable cases where mainstream scholars adopt an inductive approach, by reimagining or recasting the secondary literature in a specific field in order to construct or promote frameworks, models, or theoretical arguments that can be used to stimulate further research and inquiry. To take one example, among journalism and media scholars, Pamela Shoemaker and Stephen Reese's (1996; 2014) book *Mediating the Message*, which draws on a huge body of theoretical academic literature in order to construct a hierarchical model of influences on news media content, stands out as an important work of media sociology.

Second, within anarchist studies specifically, this basic methodological approach is not unusual. For instance, anarchist sociologists Dana Williams and Jeff Shantz (2014) bring anarchism to bear on sociology in a similar fashion, by interrogating key sociological concepts from an anarchist perspective. David Graeber (2004) takes a similar approach in his seminal *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology*. According to activist scholar Brian Martin (2010), inductive theory building approaches are often conducive to

constructing models and frameworks that could benefit activists and other social movement actors. This study is informed by the work of these anarchist scholars. Third, simply put, this dissertation's inductive theory building approach arguably is the best way to address its main research question: What might an anarchist theory of news media look like? To begin answering this, this study pursues six interrelated lines of inquiry, sketched below.

LINE 1: ANARCHIST THEORIZING ABOUT NEWS MEDIA

As intimated above, the first line of inquiry concerns how anarchist ideas and practices may be brought to be bear on academic scholarship about news media and activists or social movement actors. The terms 'mainstream (news) media' and 'alternative news media' are culturally contingent, moving targets, because media that appear as alternative, activist, or radical in one context might appear as mainstream or tame in another (Atton 2002). Until very recently, scholars such as John Downing (1984; 2001, pp. viii-ix) treated the split between alternative and mainstream as a binary with little to no middle ground. However, as Chris Atton (2002) argues, it is useful to conceptualize news media institutions as featuring different degrees of alterity according to different aspects of their *products* (content; form; reprographic innovations) and *processes* (distributive use; transformed social relations, roles, and responsibilities; transformed communication processes) (p. 27). Rather than promoting a purist vision, such as writers who argue that alternative media *must* be anti-corporate or non-hierarchical (e.g., Albert 1997), Atton's approach takes into account the hybridity and "mixed radicalism" of alternative media (p. 29).

The term ‘news media’ can refer either to news content itself or the producers of such content. Thus, the term ‘mainstream news media’ as it appears in this study refers to news content produced by mainstream news organizations. But it also refers to news media companies themselves, which are typically privately owned and organized as hierarchical corporations. Mainstream news media control the largest distribution channels and are staffed by reporters, editors, and other workers (such as computer techs, delivery drivers, printers, lawyers, and advertising staff), many of whom consider themselves to be professionals, who produce and disseminate news media products such as newspapers, magazines, televised broadcasts, and web content (Herman & Chomsky 1988/2002; Shoemaker & Reese 1996; 2014). Mainstream news media include prestige news organizations such as *Time Magazine*, the *New York Times*, the Washington Post, CNN, and CBS News, but also include local TV news stations and newspapers such as the *Austin American-Statesman* (Chomsky 1997; Gans 1979).

On the other hand, the terms ‘alternative news media’ and ‘activist (news) media’ are notoriously hard to pin down, which leads some writers to conclude that there can be no meaningful definition of these terms (Abel 1997). Because I could not anticipate how my interview subjects will employ terms (see Chapters 6 and 7), and because this study focuses mainly on activist uses of news media rather than definitional disputes among alternative media scholars, I propose to treat these terms broadly. Atton’s conception of mixed alterity suggests that certain forms of digital and social media—in particular, websites such as Twitter and Facebook, which are controlled by giant corporations but enable activist communication—can sometimes occupy a middle ground between mainstream and alternative conceptions.

Unlike Marxism—a theoretical cornerstone of critical communications studies—which is replete with economic formulae, technical jargon, and other hallmarks of “high”

theory created by philosophers, scientists, economists, and other academics, anarchist ideas and principles exemplify or lend themselves to creating "low" theory, i.e., "critical thought indifferent to the institutional forms of the academy or the art world" (Wark 2011, p. 3). Low theory offers explanations for different features of social-political reality, but does not build totalizing frameworks or worldviews. Thus, for our purposes, rather than presenting an anarchist theory of news media power and media-movement interactions, it is more accurate to say that this dissertation tries to show how anarchist *theorizing about* these topics might proceed. This conception of low theory is what I have in mind when I write that the main goal of this dissertation is to construct or promote an anarchist media theory or an anarchist account of news media power and/or media-movement interactions.

Anarchism may be diverse, but its different schools share many principles in common, including a rejection of different forms of authority and domination, a defense of freedom and autonomy, and an emphasis on prefigurative politics and direct action. Awareness and exposition of these principles may enable one to theorize about the informational power of news media and communications technologies along lines consistent with anarchist thought and practice. Another important aspect of this is theorizing about cultural production along anarchist lines.

In addition, anarchism is notable for its critique of other ideas and political philosophies, especially of what might be called Orthodox Marxism, which includes classical Marxism but also Leninism, Trotskyism, and related schools of thought. For this reason, this study also seeks to show how anarchist ideas apply to established, high theoretical Marxist accounts of news media power, such as the media hegemony thesis, as well as more mainstream academic accounts, such as framing and political economy.

LINE 2: THE FACE OF ACTIVIST RESEARCH

Anarchist academics face several obstacles, in part because critical and radical scholars alike deride the low theory of anarchism as naïve or theoretically underdeveloped as compared with the high theory of Marxism. Moreover, anarchists themselves are often hostile to academics and intellectuals, who they perceive as career-driven or vanguardist rather than as genuinely committed to working within or alongside popular struggles and social movements (e.g., Gelderloos 2010b). As a result, anarchist ideas have received practically zero attention in the academy, an outcome that many anarchists and other radicals in the streets strongly prefer. This work examines this tension as well as anarchism's relationship to intellectuals, academics, and the academy, in order to understand the roots of its exclusion from most academic communications inquiry.

This line of inquiry also focuses attention on how anarchists and other radicals in the academy might approach the task of actually doing radical communications research, given that the university system poses profound ethical-political and epistemological dilemmas for would-be activist researchers.* Even though journalism scholars know more about the functions, goals, and content of journalism and news media than most activists, they have not added significantly to the conversation about media as it relates to movement strategy (Frey & Carragee 2007). Stephen Reese (1999) argues that journalism schools have been pressured to abandon their academic ethos in favor of supporting the news industry largely by vocational training. However, the problem runs deeper and can be linked to the political economy of journalism research and education: how J-Schools

* These same concerns have motivated activist scholars and graduate students to produce their own journals and hold their own conferences. For example, the University of Texas at Austin hosts Abriendo Brecha, an annual conference dedicated to activist scholarship, defined by conference organizers as "research and creative intellectual work in alignment with communities, organizations, movements, and networks working for social and economic justice." See http://ddce.utexas.edu/abriendobrecha/ for more information.

operate and scholars' obligation to produce content that prepares them for upward mobility and recognition. These motivations lead to a need to critically examine how journalism and communications scholarship is produced, validated, and shared.

LINE 3: ASSESSING THE "PROBLEM OF THE MEDIA"

The third line of inquiry concerns mass news media's adversarial functions, i.e., the various means by which the mainstream media threaten democracy or suppress activists and social movement actors. Among activists, academics, and other informed critics of news media, historically there does not appear to be widespread agreement on what, exactly, constitutes the "problem of the (mainstream news) media" (Altschull 1995; Breed 1955; Gans 1979; Gitlin 1980; Herman & Chomsky 1988/2002; Kaufman 2003; McChesney 1999; 2004; Parenti 1986; 1992; Sinclair 1919/2002; Schiller 1969/1992; 1973; Shoemaker & Reese 1996; Tuchman 1978). Although many critics agree that corporate influence factors into perceptions of adversarial press performance, the issue is more complex than this. In addition to pinpointing the corrupting influences of corporatism, racism, and sexism, left-progressive activists offer multiple, frequently contradictory criticisms of the mass news media, such as that mainstream news is not objective or possibly too objective, or that news media are too liberal or too conservative. More research is needed to uncover how contemporary activists actually view news media as adversaries to causes and movements.

At the root of competing dissident claims lie different theoretical perspectives, which vary widely in their accounts of news media power, influences on content, media effects on audiences, and how the mainstream press undermine or activate possibilities for resistance. For example, accounts of media hegemony posit that the mass news media

exert a powerful influence on audiences (Gitlin 1980; Gramsci 1971), whereas the propaganda model developed by Ed Herman and Noam Chomsky (1988/2002) says nothing about news media's effects, even though many dissidents and activists assume it does (Herman 1996). In addition, it appears that relatively few activists give serious consideration to academics' responses to critical media theories. Although radicals may have valid reasons for not taking academic criticisms too seriously, this can weaken creative thinking on these issues.

These considerations suggest that although left-progressive activists appreciate in a general sense the problem of the media, they perhaps lack a deeper appreciation of the body of theory in which the left's criticisms are rooted. By attempting to cast light on some of these issues, my intent is not to argue that one perspective is correct or more useful than others. Rather, my approach is similar to that of Uri Gordon (2008), an Israeli anarchist, who writes in his study of contemporary anarchism that he is "not so much interested in finding answers as in pinning down some of the relevant *questions* that lie at the bottom of endless and recurring debates, to explain their background, to map and disentangle them" (p. 7; emphasis in original).

LINE 4: CLARIFYING AND ASSESSING STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

The fourth line of inquiry concerns how activists make sense of news media's roles as a site of struggle and as tools and resources they can use to further their causes. Radicals often speak of *praxis*, which refers to the interrelation of action and reflection on ideas and theories. Praxis is where theoretical rubber meets the road of practice: action and reflection inform and shape one another in a dialectical relationship. The problem of the media points to the fact that activist praxis related to these issues has some murky

elements. Although critical and radical media theories have implications for activist strategy, they often do a poor job of spelling these out. A major goal of this dissertation is to articulate some of the strategic implications raised by hegemony, political economy, and framing accounts of media power, and to assess these theories and their implications from an anarchist perspective.

In addition, radical and critical accounts of news media identify different roles that news media play vis-à-vis social movements and activism. In particular, radical activist accounts frame news media as a site of struggle, an opponent that activists and movements contend with, and a tool or resource that activists seek to use or exploit. This study maps these conceptions, in order to help clarify how they promote (or fail to promote) different strategic ideas. Once again, in examining these issues it is not my intent to offer prescriptions regarding specific strategies; rather, the point is to lay some groundwork for further radical inquiry and reflection.

LINE 5: DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES AND ACTIVISTS' OPTIONS

Of the important books written by leftists and progressives about news media (e.g., Herman & Chomsky 1988/2002; Lakoff 2004; McChesney 1999; 2004; Ryan 1991; Salzman 2003), few explore the ways in which theory might encourage the use of new digital technologies to widen the field of options available to activists and enable more interaction. Today's media environment differs significantly from that of forty, twenty, or even ten years ago. It is no longer clear, for instance, that activists should attract prime time news coverage to have their messages heard. New digital technologies present more options for organizing, reaching audiences, and allowing engaged readers to speedily share information distributed by activists and organizers (Cleaver 1995; 2000;

McCaughey & Ayers 2003). In fact, in light of these options, traditional mainstream media may in some instances be irrelevant to the audiences of activists and organizers.

The internet contributes to the decline of mainstream news media while allowing alternative media to expand (Gillmor 2004; McChesney & Nichols 2010); in 2010, more Americans received their news from the web than they did from newspapers (Pew 2011). Globalization has stimulated a proliferation in ethnically oriented television, radio, newspapers, and websites, long scorned by the mainstream news media, which now reach approximately 60 million Americans (Allen 2009; González & Torres 2011; Matsaganis, Katz, & Ball-Rokeach 2011). Meanwhile movement-created media and social media have become important tools for activists, raising questions about new civic crises created by digital technologies, "slacktivism" (a portmanteau of 'slacker' and 'activism'), and whether organizers now operate in a kind of disconnected bubble (Morozov 2011; Pariser 2011; Smucker 2011). For example, popular social networking websites like Twitter and Facebook have made it very easy for activists to circulate information, but arguably divert time and resources away from more traditional forms of activism, such as door-to-door to organizing (Gladwell 2010).

Activist circulation of news content via social media such as Facebook, Tumblr, and Twitter also raises many of the same issues that activists confront in their criticisms of the mainstream press, such as the corporate structure of these media and their roles as gatekeepers. For instance, the social networking site Facebook has been known to delete profiles and posts by activists and groups involved a wide range of left-progressive causes, including banking reform, Palestine solidarity efforts, and animal rights activism. Thus a tension exists between the fact that activists are critical of mainstream news media, yet they share and circulate information on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube (Thorson et al. 2013; Youmans & York 2012), which by any reasonable

definition are corporate media giants. Activists also express concern over social media companies' policies of handing over users' personal information to law enforcement agencies. This study aims to explore how contemporary activists think through these and related issues.

LINE 6: ALTERNATIVE AND MAINSTREAM MEDIA INTERACTIONS

To a lesser extent, this dissertation also works to theorize about overlooked aspects of the ternary (threefold) relationship among mainstream media, activist or alternative media, and social movements. Journalism and media scholars who study these topics typically focus on the relationship between movements and alternative media, or on how mainstream media depicts or portrays movements. Many of these studies orient themselves toward the state and mainstream news organizations, though, by treating these institutions as principal actors while downplaying activists and newsworkers' agency. It is telling that mainstream political communications research in the United States, such as studies of framing and agenda-setting, does not typically consider the communicative activity or tactics and strategies of non-state actors. For instance, Martin (2004) examines how mainstream news media framed important labor struggles in the 1990s without exploring how or whether union organizers tried to influence coverage. Research approaches such as this treat activists as passive rather than active participants in the process of making meaning.

In addition, very little has been published about the intermedia relationship between alternative/activist media and mainstream media. The results of a national survey study show that reporters and editors working within mainstream media tend to ignore alternative media and ethnic publications – especially publications critical of

mainstream coverage, which stifles journalistic curiosity and undermines newsroom diversity (De Uriarte 2003, pp. 77-78). But this is only one of the many ways in which alternative and mainstream media interrelate. To date, no one has promoted theory that connects and explores the workings of all three—mainstream media, activist or alternative media, and social movements. A framework that draws attention to these interrelationships might also energize civic activists.

ROADMAP

When taken together, the answers suggested by these lines of inquiry offer something which approaches an anarchist account of news media and media-movement interactions. There are multiple ways in which one might pursue these questions. What follows is this study's approach:

Chapter 2 frames the dissertation by examining anarchism's theoretical content and applying anarchist ideas to an analysis of news media power. It describes key principles at the heart of contemporary anarchist thought and practice, as well as speculates about why no other study articulates an anarchist account of news media. It then sketches an anarchist critique of informational power and technology before bringing anarchism to bear on news media. A concluding section sketches implications of this critique.

Unlike Marxists, who decades ago cemented their status as serious critical scholars, anarchists today occupy few places in the academy. Over the past two decades they made more inroads, but as Jeff Shantz (2001) observes, this activity has not been matched by critical reflection on the limitations of anarchist engagement with the institutions of higher learning. Specifically, anarchists and other radical academics have

not paid sufficient attention to the tension between themselves and activists outside the academy. For that reason, Chapter 3 examines four key sources of friction between academic researchers and radical anti-capitalists. These are: a distinction between scholars and radical intellectuals; the class position of academic researchers; the relationship between power and expertise; and academia's troubling influence on scholarship and scholars, who occupy a privileged space in knowledge production.

This last concern is the focus of this chapter, which examines key features of administrative and critical research orientations, with the goal of carving out the contours of a radical research orientation as an alternative to both. The point of this exposition is not to reexamine or reignite turf wars between defenders of administrative and critical research approaches. Rather, the point is to illuminate a researcher ethos that tries to address some of the ethical-political and epistemological dilemmas that anarchists and other radicals urge academics to consider before entering the field. This examination shows how academia's intellectual-institutional setting influences research, while presenting the reader with a conception of activist research which informs this dissertation—a role which in the past decade gained some academic recognition. In a sense, it serves as a prelude to this study's theory and methods chapters. As Stanley Deetz (1992) observes, "As researchers, we must provide the necessary insight for good social choices, but we cannot do that without examining the democratic foundations of our own research. Neither natural nor causal or evolutionary modes of transformation can redeem us from the inevitability of continued theoretical choices and our moral responsibility to make good choices. … It is not in our theory and judgments that we begin, but in our pretheoretical understandings and prejudices" (pp. 65-6).

Chapter 4 describes three conceptions of news media vis-à-vis social movements and activism, which appear throughout radical activist discourse on media-movement

interactions. These roles are *media as site of struggle*, *media as adversary*, and *media as tools or resources* that activists and their opponents can use or exploit. In examining the news media as a site of struggle, I present an anarchist critique of Habermas's idea of the public sphere. Chapter 4 provides necessary context for theoretical arguments I develop in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5 examines theoretical traditions that left-progressive and radical anti-capitalist activists often draw on to explain how hierarchies and multiple realities of oppression influence or manifest in news media. These include media hegemony, political economy, and framing. This chapter describes strategic conceptions implied by these theories, as well as critiques these theoretical accounts from the perspective of anarchism.

In addition to developing theoretical arguments rooted in anarchism, this dissertation also seeks to understand how radicals and progressives actually think about media as it relates to their activism and organizing efforts. To gain insight into these matters, I conducted a series of ethnographic, in-depth interviews with 16 different left-progressive and radical anti-capitalist activists based in Austin, Texas. From these interviewees, five anarchists were selected for closer examination. Chapter 6 describes the methodological aspects of this original research, including the dilemmas involved with seeking approval for research from Institutional Review Boards. Chapter 7 reviews findings from these in-depth interviews. Chapter 8 offers conclusions and suggestions for further research.

Chapter 2: Anarchism, Information Power, and Technology

Many different ideas inform and animate the organizers, activists, groups, and movements that challenge oppressive regimes based on white supremacy, patriarchy, heteronormativity*, capitalism and corporatism, political authoritarianism, colonialism, anthropocentricism, and the pillaging of the planet and its resources. Ranging from reformist to revolutionary, mainstream to marginal, they reflect a great breadth and complexity of thought that characterizes all oppositional movements.

In the United States, the animating ideas with the widest influence are those which reflect longstanding national mythologies and ingrained cultural mores. For instance, immigrants' rights groups and mainstream labor unions such as the AFL-CIO often invoke Americans' deep abiding belief in the American Dream in their campaigns to gain support, recruit new members, and raise funds. Similarly, by defining patriotism as loyalty to democratic principles, and war as a threat to those principles, many antiwar activists argue that dissent and peace efforts are in fact patriotic. This argument draws inspiration from colonial dissenters, as well as a long tradition of free speech battles to uphold the first amendment (Ivie 2007; Rabban 1997; Woehrle, Coy, & Maney 2008). Religious faith, too, has long been a critical influence on movement building in the United States, giving inspiration to the abolition, temperance, and moral reform movements of the 19th century, the civil rights struggles of the 1950s and 1960s, the Plowshares Movement of the 1980s, and contemporary struggles to abolish the death penalty, give asylum to undocumented immigrants, and protect the ecology (Guzder 2011; Young 2006). Patriotic and religious messages resonate with many activists and ordinary Americans—conservatives, liberals, and progressives alike—because these are

* Heteronormativity, often linked with homophobia, refers to the belief that all humans are either male or female and that heterosexuality is "normal," preferred, or (ethically, biologically, etc.) appropriate.

deeply embedded cultural schemas (Hirshberg 1993; Young 2006). According to Gallup (2013; 2014a; 2015) data, a large majority of adults in the United States say they are proud to be American, and more than half "believe that religion can answer all or most of today's problems."

But activists and movements also embrace ideas that are frequently misunderstood, maligned, or considered unpopular by outside observers. Indeed, even within social movements, activists struggle with concepts such as Marxism, feminism, anarchism, and other perspectives on society's underlying power dynamics. Radical perspectives are a hard sell; they jar with commonly held beliefs about race, gender, kinship, governance, culture, and how societies function, shattering these conceptions and laying bare previously unnoticed forms of oppression, social control, and stratification. They also come with jargon and historical baggage, such as longstanding tensions between Marxists and anarchists, which can create uneasy alliances within movements.[*] Radicals themselves can be off-putting, too, especially those with forceful personalities. As veteran organizer Cynthia Kaufman (2003) observes, "In meetings as well as written materials, newcomers encounter people who use information and political jargon as a weapon to gain social status and intimidate others" (p. 2).

It is easy to see why many activists—newcomers and veterans alike—tune out radical perspectives and personalities while hitching their political projects to mainstream ideas. However, radical ideas have long informed leftwing and progressive struggles in

[*] Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm (1973/2001) suggests that tensions between anarchists and Marxists have eased considerably since the early 20th century, when the Comintern-dominated Second International excluded anarchists from its ranks (pp. 67-83). More recently, anarchists and Marxists have collaborated on insurgent political projects such as the Love and Rage Revolutionary Anarchist Federation (Filippo 2003). Moreover, in cities and states with small left bases, it is not uncommon for anarchists, Marxists, and other left-progressive activists to make compromises in order to unify around local political projects. For a recent attempt at anarchist-Marxist synthesis, see Staughton Lynd and Andrej Grubacic's (2008) *Wobblies and Zapatistas*.

the United States (Buhle 1983/2013; McCarthy & McMillian 2003; Zinn 1980/2003; Zinn & Arnove 2014). Arguably they have been indispensable to dissidents, activists, and movement builders, helping to crystalize analyses of social problems, as well as movement goals and strategies for social transformation (e.g., Albert et al. 1986; Kaufman 2003; Team Colors Collective 2010). Radical ideas, in other words, pay huge dividends to those who would draw lessons from them. Without becoming too dogmatic, activists would do well to give serious consideration to these ideas and reflect on their implications.

Within the field of critical communications scholarship, most radical analyses of news media and media-movement interactions are anchored in theoretical perspectives such as Marxism, feminism, post-colonial studies, poststructuralism, and critical race theory. Yet comparatively anarchism, a radical political perspective with a long intellectual tradition, has only barely been explored. To that end, this chapter seeks to carve out space for anarchism within the field. In the first section below, I initiate unfamiliar readers by examining anarchism's origins as a revolutionary socialist movement, early anarchist thought and practice, and anarchism's influence on workers' struggles in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The second section covers contemporary anarchism: its influence on present-day activism and organizing, as well as anarchist principles that are relevant for theorizing about information, technology, news media, media-movement interactions, and the ways in which these interrelate. The third section offers explanations for the near-absence of scholarly activist research on anarchism's relationship to news media. The fourth section examines the relationships between anarchism, informational power, and technology. The fifth section brings these considerations to bear on news media and sketches some implications for activists and movements.

ORIGINS OF THE REVOLUTIONARY ANARCHIST TRADITION

Few words in the English language are misused more often than 'anarchy', 'anarchist', and 'anarchism'. These have multiple connotations, owing to their histories as scare words; anarchists' conflicts with Marxists and other left groups; and the character of the anarchist movement itself, which as a broad revolutionary tradition encompasses multiple disputing tendencies (Guérin 1970; 1980/2005; Joll 1979; McKay 2008; Marshall 1992/2010). Popular conceptions of anarchism commonly associate it with chaos, violence, nihilism, and disobedience (Guérin 1970, p. 11; Marshall 1992/2010, p. ix), which poses a challenge for researchers who both identify as anarchists and wish for their ideas to be taken seriously by non-anarchists.* Building towards an anarchist account of news media and media-movement interactions requires clearing away some of this fog.

Some writers conceptualize anarchism as a blanket anti-statism with roots in ancient civilizations such as the Greeks and Chinese (e.g., Eltzbacher 1900/1960; Graham 2005; 2009; Marshall 1992/2010), or as an historical tendency for humans to seek out, challenge, and dismantle oppressive power structures and hierarchies (e.g., Chomsky 1970/2005; 2005; Nettlau 1932/1996; Rocker 1938/2004).† Sympathetic accounts of anarchism as a timeless struggle against oppression are ahistorical, however, and the sole criterion of anti-statism does not clearly delineate anarchism from other schools of

* Chomsky (1995/2005) argues that misrepresentations of anarchism "will exist as long as concentrations of power engender a kind of commissar class to defend them. Since they are usually not very bright, or are bright enough to know that they'd better avoid the arena of fact and argument, they'll turn to misrepresentation, vilification, and other devices that are available to those who know that they'll be protected by the various means available to the powerful. We should understand why this occurs, and unravel it as best we can. That's part of the project of liberation—of ourselves and others, or more reasonably, of people working together to achieve these aims" (p. 180).

† For instance, the opening words to Max Nettlau's (1932/1996) *A Short History of Anarchism* are, "The history of anarchist ideas is inseparable from the history of all progressive developments and aspirations towards liberty" (p. 1). Nettlau was a German historian and anarchist who devoted most of his life to the anarchist movement in Europe.

thought, such as Marxism and radical economic liberalism, which also profess opposition to the state (Schmidt & Van der Walt 2009, pp. 17-18).* The origins of anarchism are more recent than antiquity: It first emerged as a revolutionary working class, anti-capitalist movement and a radical left-wing alternative to Marxism in the 1860s and 1870s. Its earliest exponents and pioneers were Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1840/1994; 1847/1888; 1851/1923; 1863/1979; 2011), Mikhail Bakunin (1873/1990; 1882/1970; 1953; 1980; 1992), and Peter Kropotkin (1885/1992; 1898/1994; 1899/1989; 1902/1990; 1906/1990; 1993; 1995). Bakunin and Kropotkin in particular were key figures in developing and promulgating anarchist ideas (Schmidt & Van der Walt 2009), throwing themselves into workers and peasants' struggles throughout Europe and Russia (Kropotkin 1899/1989; Leier 2006; Joll 1979; Woodcock & Avakumovic 1950/1971).

Like Marxists, anarchists saw themselves as socialists or communists, meaning they advocated popular control over the economy and workers' control and/or socialized ownership of the means of production. Unlike Marxists, who believed state power could be wielded to achieve this social transformation, anarchists were hostile to the idea that revolutionaries could use the state as a vehicle for transitioning from capitalism to a stateless, classless society (Guérin 1970; Schmidt & Van der Walt 2009). However, it is a mistake to characterize classical anarchism as the belief that the state is, in some sense, the root of all oppression or evil, because this purges it of its anti-capitalist or socialist content (Schmidt & Van der Walt 2009, p. 15).

* Published in 2009 to positive reviews, Michael Schmidt and Lucien van der Walt's book *Black Flame: The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism* drew controversy after Schmidt was described as a white supremacist by individuals who provided documented evidence to support the allegations. As a result, Oakland, California-based publisher AK Press pulled the book. Although I consider the evidence against Schmidt to be pretty damning, I cite the book for its scholarship and the work of co-author Lucien van der Walt, with whom I have corresponded—and in respect for the First Amendment and academic integrity.

Instead of Marx's socialism from above, anarchists believed in revolutionary socialism from below: voluntary associations among autonomous production associations and communes, self-managed and federated upwards, that would replace the state and capitalism in all their functions, or at least those functions worth preserving (Bakunin 1953; 1980; 1992; Guérin 1971; Kropotkin 1898/1994; 1902/1990; 1906/1990; Proudhon 1863/1979; Rocker 1938/2004; Schmidt & Van der Walt 2009). Because anarchists were—and continue to be—both anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian, the phrase 'libertarian socialism' is frequently used as an umbrella term for anarchism and its fellow travelers, such as situationism, autonomism, libertarian Marxism, and participatory economics (e.g., Albert 2003; Brinton 2004; Castoriadis 1988; 1993; Cleaver 1979; Debord 1967/1970; Negri 1984/1991; Pannekoek 1948/2003).* Anarchists and other libertarian socialists commonly refer to followers of Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, and Mao as authoritarian socialists or state socialists (Chomsky 1970/2005; 2005; Guérin 1970; Prichard, Kinna, Pinta, & Berry 2012). Instead of societies governed by coercion and force, anarchists envision a world based on principles such as liberty, solidarity, mutual aid, and voluntary association (Bakunin 1953; 1980; 1992; Guérin 1970; Kropotkin 1898/1994; 1902/1990; 1906/1990; McKay 2008).

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, anarchists were a vibrant, influential force in peasant and workers' struggles around the world (Graham 2005; 2009; Marshall 1992/2010; Schmidt & Van der Walt 2005). In Europe, anarchist agitation reached a zenith in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), when millions of revolutionary syndicalists and anarchists collectivized agrarian areas in Andalusia, as well as major industrial

* It bears mentioning that some contemporary anarchists—in particular, those who describe themselves as nihilist, anti-organizational, autonomist, or post-Left—reject the libertarian socialist label because although they oppose capitalism and the state, they also view the left's historical emphasis on socialism as a bankrupt political project.

centers in Catalonia, before the Fascist army of Francisco Franco crushed their revolutionary efforts (Bookchin 1994; Brenan 1943/1990; Casas 1986; Chomsky 1967/2003; Dolgoff 1974; Jackson 1965; Orwell 1952). In the United States, anarchists and syndicalists fought for the 8-hour work day, established colonies and experimental schools, and agitated against militarism and for expansive free speech rights (Avrich 1980; 1984; 1995; Dubofsky 1969; Rabban 1997).

The politically motivated arrests, trial, and executions of four anarchists in Chicago following the Haymarket affair of 1886 drew many radicals to the cause of anarchism, including future luminaries Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman, and Voltairine de Cleyre (Avrich 1984, pp. 433-4; Goldman 1931/1970, pp. 8-10). However, the anarchist movement in the United States declined as it gained a violent reputation. Berkman's attempted assassination of industrialist Henry Clay Frick in 1892, Leon Czolgosz's assassination of President William McKinley in 1901, and the murder convictions of Sacco and Vanzetti in 1921 all damaged anarchism's reputation in the public eye (Berkman 1912/1999; Goldman 1931/1970; Marshall 1992/2010). Many anarchists joined the Industrial Workers of the World after it was founded in 1905, and by the 1920s, a broad section of the American Left turned to Lenin and the Bolsheviks for political guidance and inspiration. But by World War II, the anarchist movement had virtually disappeared from the American scene (Bell 1952/1996, pp. 106-9; Dubofsky 1969; Marshall 1992/2010, pp. 499-503).

After anarchism faded from view in the early 20th century, torchbearers such as Murray Bookchin, Sam Dolgoff, Paul Goodman, Howard Ehrlich, and Dwight Macdonald kept its ideas alive in journals and books in the decades that followed. Due to the influence of these and other writers, anarchist ideas survived in the United States: They saw a brief resurgence in the counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s, and anarchistic

groups such as Movement for a New Society left an impression on the left-progressive social movements of the 1980s (Cornell 2011; Marshall 1992/2010, pp. 539-558). It was not until the 1990s, however, that anarchism in the United States gained a new lease on life, with the advent of the anti-/alter-globalization movement* (Epstein 2001; Marshall 1992/2010, pp. 697-9).

CONTEMPORARY ANARCHISM

For most of the 20th century, the revolutionary left—both globally and within the United States—stood in the shadows of Bolshevism and Soviet-style Communism. When the Soviet Union finally dissolved in 1991, it signaled a major blow to Marxism-Leninism and spurred efforts to revitalize anarchism, which emerged as a prominent alternative vision of revolutionary social organization.† Throughout the 1990s, many radical activists at the center of the alter-globalization and anti-corporate movements identified as anarchists or embraced anarchist values and strategies (Epstein 2001). For instance, in 1999, Direct Action Network, a confederation of anarchist and anti-authoritarian groups and organizations, played a major role in coordinating the massive protests against the World Trade Organization in Seattle (Ney 2002). Prior to that, the Zapatista uprising of 1994 aroused critical but revolutionary solidarity from anarchists around the world, who drew important lessons from these communities in struggle (Day 1998a; Lynd & Grubacic 2008).‡ Although it is difficult to say that anarchists constitute a

* The term 'anti-globalization' unfairly paints alter-globalization activists as Luddites, isolationists, or opponents of change or progress. The term 'alter-globalization' captures the movement's true aims: Although these activists oppose capitalist globalization, they generally support forms of "globalization from below."

† Even within the USSR, anarchists found renewed energy as the Soviet system collapsed. See Ruff (1991) for more.

‡ The Zapatista Army of National Liberation (*Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional*, or EZLN) is revolutionary political community based in Chiapas, the southernmost state in Mexico.

national or global movement, anarchism exerts an important influence on contemporary leftwing, progressive, and anti-capitalist struggles around the world. Even groups and activists that do not identify as anarchist often exhibit an anarchist ethos or sensibility (Day 2005; Epstein 2001; Gordon 2008; Marshall 1992/2010).

On a global level, leftists have not responded to the collapse of Soviet-style planned economies and the spread of neoliberalism by articulating a coherent, radical, popular alternative to state socialism and corporate capitalism, despite widespread resistance to both (Schmidt & Van der Walt 2005, pp. 9-14). Against this backdrop, anarchist ideas are especially relevant, because they animate countless social justice struggles. According to Gordon (2008), "Far from the end of history predicted in 1989 [by neoconservative Francis Fukuyama], the circulation and spread of anarchist struggles and politics – largely in advanced capitalist countries – has been a vital force behind resistance to neoliberalism and the Permanent War" (p. 2). As a leading historian of anarchism observes, "Indeed, in many ways the soul of the [alter-globalization] movement is anarchist" (Marshall 1992/2010; p. 697).

Despite drawing on classical anarchist thought for inspiration, "Contemporary anarchism is only in small part a direct continuation of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century anarchist movements …. Instead, the roots of today's anarchist networks can be found in the processes of intersection and fusion among radical social movements since the 1960s, whose paths have never been overtly anarchist" (Gordon 2008, p. 5). Gordon (2006) writes:

> [Contemporary anarchism] represents the revival of anarchist politics over the past decade in the *intersection* of several other movements, including radical ecology, feminism, black and indigenous liberation, anti-nuclear movements and, most recently, resistance to neoliberal capitalism and the "global permanent war". Because of its hybrid genealogy, anarchism in the age of globalisation is a very

> fluid and diverse movement, evolving in a rapidly-shifting landscape of social contention (p. 9; emphasis in original).

Contemporary anarchism is a complex thing: It represents simultaneously a social movement, a political culture, and a collection of ideas (Epstein 2001; Gordon 2006; 2008). Rather than focusing on anarchism as a political movement, this dissertation is concerned with how anarchist ideas can be brought to bear on issues surrounding activism, news media, technology, and information. I argue that the following, mutually-reinforcing principles, which lie at the core of contemporary anarchist thought and practice, are especially relevant for developing an anarchist account of news media.

Rejection of Oppression, Authority, and Hierarchy

Today's anarchists have broader agendas than their Old Left* counterparts. Even though anarchists throughout history opposed race- and gender-based forms of oppression as well as capitalism and political authoritarianism (Guérin 1970; McKay 2008; Marshall 1992/2010; Schmidt & Van der Walt 2005), contemporary anarchism is more sensitive to different forms of social control, inequity, and oppression (Gordon 2006; 2008). In addition to opposing the state and capitalism, most anarchists also reject all or most of the following: white supremacy and racism, patriarchy and sexism, consumerism, landlordism, slavery, colonialism, nationalism, patriotism, organized religion, compulsory schooling, xenophobia, heteronormativity, homophobia, transphobia, ageism†, ableism‡, speciesism§, elitism, discrimination based on a person's

* The term "Old Left" refers to the constellation of unions and labor-oriented movements, organizations, and political parties (such as the Socialist Party and the Communist Party) that were active in the United States from the late 19th century to the mid-20th century.
† Ageism refers to discrimination based on age.
‡ Ableism refers to discrimination based on physical ability.
§ Speciesism, or human supremacy, refers to discrimination on the basis of species membership.

appearance, intelligence, health, or genetic makeup, and domination by humans of the environment and non-human animals.

Many anarchists also reject the argument, commonly associated with classical and Orthodox Marxism, that the forces of production and the relations of production serve as the economic "base" upon which a social "superstructure" rests (e.g., Althusser 1971/2008; Marx 1859/1970). On this view, for instance, oppression of women and people of color is a function of, or in some sense reducible to, class oppression. Contemporary Marxist-Leninists sometimes refer to this as "special oppression," but most anarchists and anarchist-inspired writers contend that gender- and race-based forms of oppression are irreducible, not functions of capitalist oppression. Generally speaking, anarchism is much better at recognizing that there are "multiple realities of oppression," to borrow a phrase from John Downing (2001, p. 13), which influence, texture, or color one another (Albert et al. 1986; Albert 2006a; Downing 2001; Gordon 2006; 2008; McKay 2008). According to Gordon (2006; 2008), anarchism has moved from resistance to capitalism and the state to a generalized opposition to all forms of domination in society (p. 30). He writes: "Regimes of domination are the overarching context that anarchists see as conditioning people's socialization and background assumptions about social norms, explaining why people *fall into* certain patterns of behavior and have expectations that contribute to the perpetuation of dominatory relations" (p. 33; emphasis in original).

For example, the problem of racism in the United States does not begin and end with the attitudes and actions of racist individuals. Rather, expressions of racism are symptomatic of an institutional arrangement, white supremacy, which gives whites political, economic, and social power over people of color. Likewise, sexism and homophobia are not simply matters of personal prejudice. Rather, we live in a

heteronormative, patriarchal society wherein males exert power over females and LGBTQ and transsexual folk are routinely stigmatized and denied privileges that heterosexual and cisgendered persons enjoy. From an anarchist perspective it is wrongheaded to speak of anti-white racism or anti-male sexism, as many conservatives and even some liberals do, because racism and sexism are products of centuries of legal, economic, and social policies that were consciously crafted to preserve and extend the power of white, heterosexual males. The anarchist critique of power in all its forms is central to understanding contemporary radical activism, which Richard Day (2005) defines as "conscious attempts to alter, impede, destroy or construct alternatives to dominant structures, processes, practices and identities" (p. 4). These struggles aim for the root of social problems, seeking "to address not just the *content* of current modes of domination and exploitation, but also the *forms* that give rise to them" (ibid.; emphasis in original).

Anarchism also rejects illegitimate forms of authority, meaning a "social relationship based on status and power derived from a hierarchical position, not on individual ability," as well as hierarchy, meaning "the institutionalization of authority within a society" (McKay 2008, pp. 122-3).* Put another way, hierarchies are organizational systems and structures in which groups or individuals are subordinate to other groups or individuals above them in the hierarchy. Those at the top of hierarchies benefit from having more control over decision making and resource allocation than those at the bottom. Anarchism rejects organizational hierarchies, such as the distribution

* Anarchists do recognize legitimate forms of authority and force, such as a parent's right (indeed, obligation) to prevent a child from crossing the street without supervision. Citing the German philosopher Wilhelm von Humboldt (1852/1993), Chomsky and other anarchists frequently observe that the use of force and coercion—*and not its absence*—demands justification. Powerful states, however, rarely are able to provide justification for their coercive actions.

of power internal to a corporation or government, as well as social stratification, i.e., the separation of people into different castes or classes.

Liberty as Sacrosanct

Anarchists oppose and attack oppression, authority, and hierarchy because they value liberty and autonomy. Anarchism holds that liberty is sacrosanct—"the highest good" (ibid., p. 33)—because it "is the precondition for the maximum development of one's individual potential, which is also a social product and can be achieved only in and through community. A healthy, free community will produce free individuals, who in turn will shape the community and enrich the social relationships between the people of whom it is composed" (McKay 2008, p. 28). According to Emma Goldman (1917/1969), "Anarchism stands for a social order based on the free grouping of individuals for the purpose of producing real social wealth; an order that will guarantee to every human being free access to the earth and full enjoyment of the necessities of life, according to individual desires, tastes, and inclinations" (p. 62).

This dispels two important myths about anarchism: First, it is not the case that anarchists believe people should have freedom to do whatever they please, such as rape or commit murder. Anarchism rejects this notion of "absolute liberty," because it endangers the liberty and rights of others. For similar reasons, anarchism opposes modern Libertarianism and so-called anarcho-capitalism, because it views capitalism as a threat to liberty. Indeed, in most countries the term "libertarian" is understood to mean anarchist or libertarian socialist; it is mainly in the United States that the term has come to be associated with proponents of no-government capitalism. Second, anarchism rejects chaos and disorder, since liberty cannot exist without society and organization.

Anarchists are not opposed to organization and structure *per se*; they reject coercive organization based on oppression, authority, and hierarchy (McKay 2008, pp. 28-31).

Autonomy and Human Nature

Anarchism views human nature optimistically, positing that people are naturally intelligent, creative, and cooperative when freed from behavior-warping regimes of authority and domination. "All people deserve the freedom to organize and define themselves on their own terms," writes anarchist activist Peter Gelderloos (2010a, p. 3). Anarchists believe people should manage their own affairs individually or collectively, undisturbed by coercive actors, and be supported in their efforts to develop the skills necessary to do so (Martin 2015).

This study employs the word 'autonomy' to capture this fundamental anarchist principle* and three closely-related ideas: 1) Human nature entails an "instinct for freedom," to quote Chomsky paraphrasing Bakunin, which refers to "the need to create, to inquire, to think, to act, to organize [one's] own life in association with others and to make decisions about [one's] life without having to bend to anyone else" (Voll 1998); 2) people are not "sheep," i.e., they experience and recognize systems of oppression—or can learn to do so, through political self-education—and in fact rebel against these constantly (McKay 2008, pp. 136-9; Zinn 1980/2003), as evidenced, for instance, by widespread quiet resistance to authority and domination† (e.g., Scott 1985; 1990; 2009;

* It should be noted that he term 'autonomy' has mixed meanings among anarchists. For instance, in a well-known polemical essay, Murray Bookchin (1995) critiques and dismisses autonomy as a perceived *alternative* to social freedom. In the view of anarchism presented in this dissertation, autonomy and freedom go hand in hand.

† Quiet resistance includes "such acts as foot-dragging, dissimulations, false compliance, feigned ignorance, desertion, pilfering, smuggling, poaching, arson, slander, sabotage, surreptitious assault and murder, anonymous threats, and so on. These techniques, for the most part quite prosaic, are the ordinary means of class struggle" (Scott 1985, p. 33). John Holloway (2010), an autonomist, argues that social

Sprouse 1992); and 3) liberation is possible, not illusory, but the emancipation of oppressed peoples must be carried out by those peoples, not by elected officials or revolutionary vanguards (Guérin 1970; Kerl, Wetzel, & Lamb 2010; McKay 2008, pp. 34-6). To quote Gelderloos (2010a) again, "Freedom cannot be given; it must be taken" (p. 4).

In the social sciences, *structure* refers to patterns or conditions which limit people's choices and opportunities, whereas *agency* refers to people's capacity to think and act for themselves. Anarchist views of power tend to emphasize the primacy of agency over structure in shaping human behavior and conditions for social-political transformation.

Prefigurative Politics and Direct Action

Anarchism embraces prefigurative politics, or the principle that activists and oppositional movements should model their strategies, organizations, and aspects of their daily life on the values and principles they would base society in. Put another way, prefigurative politics is the principle that radicals should live the changes they wish to see in this world (Martin 2010, p. 33). This is reflected, for instance, in anarchism's commitment to horizontalism, collective organization, workers' self-management, non-hierarchical organizational structures, and inclusive decision-making processes (Cornell 2010; Gelderloos 2010a; Gordon 2006; 2008). It is perhaps useful to think of anarchism's aspirations—such as freedom, solidarity, and self-organization—as its methods rather than its goals. According to Gordon (2006),

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movements, by building upon such acts of rebellion, should create, deepen, and link these 'cracks' in the capitalist system.

> What anarchist ideological expression overwhelmingly lacks, on the other hand, are detailed prognostic statements on a desired future society. This does not mean that anarchism is merely destructive, but that its constructive aspects are expected to be articulated in the present-tense experimentation of prefigurative politics – not as an *a-priori* position. This lends anarchism a strongly open-ended dimension, whereby it eschews any notion of a "post-revolutionary resting point" (p. 11; italics in original).

Anarchism's emphasis on prefigurative politics suggests that revolutionary social changes are always underway, because people are constantly "building a new world in the shell of the old." The late Colin Ward (1973/1982) wrote that

> [A]n anarchist society, a society which organizes itself without authority, is always in existence, like a seed beneath the snow, buried under the weight of the state and its bureaucracy, capitalism and its waste, privilege and its injustices, nationalism and its suicidal loyalties, religious differences and their superstitious separatism (p. 18).

Revolution on this view is an unending, open-ended process of political, social, cultural, and economic transformation, in which oppression and hierarchy are not smashed in a single moment, but rather erode over years and decades until eventually they are "lost in the shuffle," so to speak. For anarchism, there is no period "after the revolution." Because revolutionary transformation is an open-ended question, anarchism stresses that humans will need to embrace diversity and experiment indefinitely with various social, political, and economic forms, rather than commit to a detailed blueprint for a future society (Chomsky 2005; Gordon 2008; Rocker 1938/2004, pp. 15-7). The idea that "we make the road by walking" (Horton & Freire 1990) is not a new one within anarchist thought. During the Spanish Civil War, the anarcho-syndicalist Rudolf Rocker (1938/2004) wrote:

> Anarchism is no patent solution for all human problems, no Utopia of a perfect social order, as it has so often been called, since on principle it rejects all absolute schemes and concepts. It does not believe in any absolute truth, or in definite final goals in human development, but in an unlimited perfectibility of social arrangements and human living conditions, which are always straining after

> higher forms of expression, and to which for this reason one can assign no definite terminus nor set any fixed goal (p. 15).

Gordon (2008) argues that, because anarchists live the changes they wish to see, anarchism's prefigurative politics are a form of constructive direct action (pp. 34-40). The term 'direct action' refers to activist strategies and tactics, often confrontational in nature, that aim to immediately effect change and force improvements, bypassing official political channels such as electoral politics and the legal system, which practitioners of direct action consider to be inefficient and ineffective (De Cleyre 1912/2004; Gordon 2008; Graeber 2009; Libcom undated). Direct action can be either violent or non-violent, legal or illegal; examples include but are not limited to: boycotts, strikes, refusal to work, sit-ins and occupations, hacktivism, theft and shoplifting, public feedings, dumpster diving, creating media, graffiti, wheatpasting, assassinations, blockades, sabotage, property destruction, and other acts of law breaking.

Anarchism's emphasis on direct action also entails a rejection of the efficacy of electoral politics as well as Marxism-Leninism's belief in vanguardism, i.e., the idea that close-knit groups of dedicated revolutionaries should form political parties or socialist organizations that will drive revolutionary activity by spreading Marxist ideas and drawing more and more members of the working class into revolutionary parties or organizations (Lenin 1902/1969). Lenin believed that the working class was incapable of moving beyond "trade union consciousness" without the aid of a radical intelligentsia who could bring "socialist consciousness" to the working class from without.[*] Against

[*] In Lenin's (1902/1969) words, "The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade union consciousness, i.e., the conviction that it is necessary to combine in unions, fight the employers, and strive to compel the government to pass necessary labour legislation, etc. The theory of socialism, however, grew out of the philosophic, historical, and economic theories elaborated by educated representatives of the propertied classes, by intellectuals. By their social status, the founders of modern scientific socialism, Marx and Engels, themselves belonged to the bourgeois intelligentsia" (pp. 31-2).

this view, anarchists and other libertarian socialists argue that people can emancipate themselves and reclaim control over their lives only by their own actions, not those of elected representatives or vanguard groups.

WHY IS THERE NO ANARCHIST THEORY OF NEWS MEDIA?

Arguably, fragments of an anarchist news media theory already exist—as do fragments of anarchist theories of anthropology, sociology, economics, and political science (Graeber 2004; Purkis 2004; Shantz & Williams 2014). Yet few writers address, with a distinctly anarchist optic or "squint" (Scott 2012), the lines of inquiry concerning mainstream news media, alternative media, and activism or movement building, on which this dissertation centers. This is odd, given that historically many anarchists developed skills as bookbinders, publishers, printers, typesetters, writers, and editors in connection with their political activities. Moreover, prominent anarchist newspapers and journals such as *Mother Earth*, *Liberty*, *Freedom*, *The Blast*, *The Alarm*, *Golos Truda*, *Freie Arbeiter Stimme*, *Freiheit*, the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, and others served as important organs for radical dissent and working class self-organization (Becker 1987; Bekken 1995; Buchstein 1974; Cobb-Reilly 1988; Kessler 1984; Roediger & Rosemont 1986; Streitmatter 2001). As press historian Rodger Streitmatter (2001) observes, "Because anarchism was such a radical notion, supporters never expected the mainstream press to discuss it with any degree of fairness. So one of the first steps the founders of the Anarchist Movement took was to establish their own press to articulate their unique ideology" (pp. 115-116). Contemporary anarchists who find themselves similarly excluded from the mainstream press continue to keep anarchist ideas alive by publishing thousands of zines, journals, newspapers, books, and websites every year. Nevertheless,

the chief difficulty in theorizing about news media and media-movement interactions along anarchist lines is the dearth of established work in this area.

There are important reasons for this vacuum. First, although it is certainly true that writers with ties to anarchist publications and causes critique or theorize about news media (e.g., Albert 1997; Goodman 1995; Herman & Chomsky 1988/2002; Atton 2002), in their criticisms of mainstream news media, anarchists and other leftists tend to rehash the political economy critique advanced by writers such as Ed Herman, Noam Chomsky, and Robert McChesney (e.g., Chomsky 1989; 2001b; Herman 1982; 1992; 1995; 1996; Herman & Chomsky 1988/2002; McChesney 2000; 2004; 2008a; McChesney & Nichols 2010). For instance, it is notable that the Anarchist FAQ—an accessible, popular introduction to anarchist ideas and arguments—provides a summary of Herman and Chomsky's (1988/2002) propaganda model in its overview of the anarchist critique of mainstream media.* This is understandable, given the rich, historical tradition of radical press criticism in the United States (McChesney & Scott 2004; Reynolds & Hicks 2012), and the fact that commercial news media have long depicted anarchists and other leftists unfavorably.

Arguably, though, anarchists' focus on political economy issues overlooks opportunities to continue theory development along anarchist lines, by exploring, for example, such themes as autonomy and prefigurative politics, i.e., modes of organization that reflect the kinds of changes in power relations that radical anti-capitalists envision. The political economy critique also leads anarchists to forego opportunities to develop, deepen, and promote alternative analyses, namely those which explore other realities of oppressions, such as patriarchy and white supremacy, and other forms of power, such as

* The complete text of the AFAQ appears both online and in print (McKay 2008), and enjoys a wide audience among English-speaking anarchists in Europe and North America. See http://www.infoshop.org/AnAnarchistFAQ

the informational power and the influence of communications technologies. This oversight is perplexing, given that contemporary anarchism provides a firm basis for a more originally "anarchistic" approach to thinking about news media and power.

Second, although some scholars incorporate anarchist ideas into their research, they do not write about news media, explicitly, through the lens of anarchist thought and practice. For example, both John Downing (2001) and Chris Atton (2002) reference anarchist ideas in their important studies of alternative media, but neither advances an anarchist theory of alternative media *per se*.

Third, anarchism has always had an uneasy relationship with the academy. Although students do encounter anarchist ideas in classrooms, anarchist graduate students are often subtly encouraged to drop their ethical-political commitments, such as through admonitions that anarchism's analytical power pales in comparison to Marxism's, or that anarchism simply has no place within serious academic scholarship. Even radical faculty members rarely take anarchist ideas seriously, erecting "a wall of silence surrounding anarchist criticisms of the state and forms of domination that extend beyond the human world" (Shannon & Armaline 2010, p. 421). Although anarchist projects and ideas have exploded in popularity outside the academy over the past two decades, the increased influence of anarchist ideas "has found almost no reflection in the academy" (Graeber 2004, p. 2). Jeff Shantz (2007-2008) argues that Graeber overstates the problem, by overlooking notable anarchist scholars in departments of sociology and anthropology, including Graeber himself. Recently published volumes of anarchist scholarship indicate, too, that "anarchist studies" increasingly is becoming a reputable researchable area (Amster et al. 2009; Purkis & Bowen 2004; Shukaitis & Graeber 2007). Given the professional preparation requirements, however, there are not many anarchists in journalism schools or colleges of communication.

Fourth, according to Graeber (2004), academics tend to gravitate toward the "High Theory" of Marxism rather than the practice-oriented ideas of anarchism, which represents more of an "attitude" toward social relations than an established body of theory. As Graeber observes, "Marxism has tended to be a theoretical or analytical discourse about revolutionary strategy," whereas "Anarchism has tended to be an ethical discourse about revolutionary practice" (p. 6). There are no compelling reasons why anarchism should be *against* theory, though, because anarchists need intellectual tools to further their revolutionary project of building a stateless, classless society (ibid., p. 7). Rather than aiming to create High Theory, "what anarchism needs is what might be called Low Theory: a way of grappling with those real, immediate questions that emerge from a transformative project" (p. 9). Generally speaking, though, career-minded academics find Low Theory unappealing, because research based in High Theory has a better chance of being published.

Fifth, anarchists have done very little to link anti-capitalists' penetrating criticisms of contemporary mainstream news media with compelling visions of alternative media systems, news ecologies, and/or journalistic practice. For example, if prevailing conceptions of journalistic objectivity are suspect, what codes of conduct should replace them? How would journalists be trained in a post-capitalist society? Which news beats would be covered? How would news organizations be structured (and subsidized, if necessary)? With rare exceptions (e.g., Albert 2006a), anarchists and other libertarian socialists have not explored these and other issues. In fact, this sort of agnosticism is characteristic of anarchists, who often argue that post-capitalist societies will need to experiment with new forms of social organization in order to discover which ones are best suited. As anarchist sociologist Stevphen Shukaitis (2004) observes,

> Anarchists on the whole have not articulated any sort of coherent alternative vision of what a society not based on capitalism and the state might look like. We have produced copious amounts of political, economic, and social critiques – but a comparatively smaller amount of work has focused on developing alternatives to what we're critiquing. Least of all has there been any clearly sketched out version of how a liberatory economy might function. … It's one thing to say that we want a world where people manage their own lives, the environment isn't destroyed … but it's another to start talking about what such might actually look like. And starting to actually create forms of cooperative practice, to re-envision utopian thinking as lived reality, is another (p. 5).

This is not to say, of course, that critical communications scholarship does not contain insights that could be incorporated into an anarchist account of news media, or which may be viewed as compatible with such an account. In fact, important works by scholars such as Atton (2002), Downing (2001), and Herman and Chomsky (1988/2002) undeniably have an anarchist bent to them.

Finally, anarchist ideas meet with resistance in the academy because anarchism is a revolutionary worldview that advocates replacing the state, capitalism, and other systems of domination with noncoercive social relations, a proposal that most academics consider dangerous or far-fetched. As Beth Hartung (1983) observes,

> To suggest that the State in modern industrial societies is less than benignly neutral is hardly startling. But to suggest that the State and other forms of imposed authority be replaced by a decentralized system of community-based cooperatives, as do contemporary anarchists, undermines the dominant mode of political organization and the number of vested interests within it. A socio-political theory which purports to be a scheme for social transformation invites charges of idealism and naiveté (p. 83).

Any suggestion that systems of domination should be overthrown will be met with opposition, because it is widely assumed that social order cannot be maintained without structural inequalities and hierarchies. Extending Hartung's view to academic scholarship, anarchist sociologists Dana Williams and Jeff Shantz (2011) observe:

> The idea that the state is the means to social order, even to the extent that it can be equated with social order, has made it very difficult for non-statist visions of

> social order to be heard. Indeed such visions are most likely to be branded utopian and dismissed out of hand. Significantly this is true even from the perspective of many on the political left. This privileging of the state or statist order and the equation of anarchy with disorder has conditioned the reception of anarchism within social sciences (p. 11).

Faced with this vacuum, there is no general consensus among anarchists about where one might draw inspiration toward theory building along lines consonant with anarchist values, ideas, and practices. In fact, this question has divided anarchists, leading for instance to the dissolution of the Love and Rage Revolutionary Anarchist Federation* in 1998 (Filippo 2003). One camp insists that anarchism's history and body of ideas are sufficient sources of inspiration, that its mistakes occur within an otherwise compelling liberatory vision, and that anarchism as a political movement can address most of its pressing questions about theory and strategy "from within" its body of history and ideas. A second camp rejects as naïve the idea that anarchism can answer all major theoretical problems from within the body of anarchist thought and practice. This camp urges radicals not only to build on anarchist ideas, but also to look for inspiration in other intellectual and revolutionary traditions (Day 1998b; Love and Rage 1997; 1998).

This dissertation recognizes anarchism's strengths while also positing that it should venture beyond its intellectual comfort zone for inspiration toward theory building. Below, I trace how anarchism already begins to analyze news media power from within its body of thought and practice. In later chapters, I pull together insights from anarchism as well as Marxism, critical communications studies, social movement studies in sociology, anthropology, and political science to develop anarchistic arguments

* Love and Rage was a revolutionary anarchist organization with members in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. In the span of nearly a decade (1989-1998), Love and Rage made important theoretical contributions to the anarchist movement on such as topics as white supremacy and revolutionary organization. The group also published a newspaper, called *Love and Rage*, which was a major influence on activists in the alter-globalization movement.

about the interrelationships among mainstream news media, alternative/activist media, and activism and social movements.

CRITIQUE OF INFORMATION POWER AND TECHNOLOGY*

Anarchism seeks to unmake and replace power structures such as white supremacy, heteronormative patriarchy, capitalism, and political authoritarianism because these produce forms of social control, inequity, and oppression. Although it receives less attention than race, gender, politics, or economics in most radical analyses, including those by anarchists, information—organized facts or data that have been communicated or received—is another important dimension of all systems of power (Beniger 1986; Deetz 1992; Foucault 1977; Innis 1950/1972; McCoy 2009; Martin 1998; Melucci 1994; Mosco & Wasko 1988; Raboy & Bruck 1989; Schiller 1969/1992; 1996; Scott 1998; Smythe 1981; Thussu 1998). "The circulation of information ties the world system together and raises new transnational problems over the control, circulation, and exchange of information. At the same time, it inflates the issues and arenas of conflict into worldwide proportions," writes sociologist Alberto Melucci (1994, p.110). Elites, corporations, states, and other bureaucratic institutions collect, shape, control, and communicate information in myriad ways that serve to preserve and extend their power, privilege, wealth, and authority. By way of illustration, consider these examples:

- In the United States and elsewhere, various law enforcement agencies, websites, marketing firms, banks, NGOs, and other bureaucratic institutions increasingly

* My examination in this section owes much to Brian Martin's (1998) book *Information Liberation*, which introduces and critiques corruptions of information power, as well as Chapter 5 of Uri Gordon's (2008) book *Anarchy Alive!*, which expertly addresses anarchism's relationship to technology.

rely on legal and illegal means of surveillance in order to collect information on citizens, such as conducting censuses, recording fingerprints, collecting genetic material, reviewing phone records, and data mining emails and other online activity. In addition to deepening state-corporate power, surveillance carries complex psychological consequences for surveilled populations. Information gathered by surveillance is also vulnerable, as indicated by cyberattacks on websites that have compromised personal information on millions of people (Dandeker 1994; Gilliom & Monahan 2013; Lyon 1994; Martin 1998; Marx 1988; Monahan 2010; Parenti 2003).

- In addition to surveilling people, powerful institutions use coercion and violence to extract confessions and obtain information, such as by torturing those suspected of terrorism, espionage, theft, murder, heresy, witchcraft, and other crimes. According to historian Alfred McCoy (2012), after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the United States revived coercive interrogation techniques developed during the Cold War in order to extract information from prisoners detained at facilities such as Abu Grahib and GITMO. Many other countries also used the attacks as a pretext for reviving repressive policies.
- During crises, governments often use radio and television to quickly disseminate information to the public. Although this can save lives during natural disasters, it can also be a key vulnerability in national political crises such as wars and military coups. As Martin (1998) observes, "Because they allow a few people to communicate to a large population with little possibility of dialogue, television and radio stations are commonly the first targets in military takeovers. Censorship of newspapers is a next step. The connection between coups and mass media also highlights the role of mass media in authoritarian regimes" (p. 14).

- The U.S. military practices "information warfare," for instance by jamming opponents' radio and television transmissions, engaging in cyberattacks, collecting strategically relevant information, and spreading propaganda and/or disinformation. The U.S. military also extends allied countries' information warfare capabilities, such as through personnel training and sharing information (such as satellite images) with foreign military and paramilitary groups. This frequently serves to protect oppressive regimes from internal populations and popular resistance movements, such as armed communities and guerilla groups (McClintlock 1992; McCoy 2009; Stokes 2005; Tedrow 2009; Wray 1997).
- Large corporations hold patents on tens of thousands of machines, technologies, chemicals, biotechnologies, and even naturally-occurring species of plants and animals. These companies invoke legal claims to intellectual property in order to stifle innovation and squelch competition. At the global level, wealthy countries such as the United States seek to strengthen intellectual property laws so that U.S. corporations will have greater leverage over farmers and manufacturers in poorer nations. In countries such as India and Mexico, patents on seeds undermine food security. Aggressive protection of corporate patents also has negative implications for public health. For instance, under the World Trade Organization's Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement, several developing countries are barred from producing life-saving generic antiretroviral drugs used to treat HIV and AIDS (Madeley 2000; Martin 1998; Patel 2007; Perelman 2002; Shiva 2000; UNAIDS 2012).*

* For a critique of arguments commonly used to justify intellectual property laws, see Hettinger (1989) and Martin (1998, pp. 29-56).

- Public schools teach students to revere the United States as well as its institutions and symbols, such as the armed forces and national flag. Compulsory schooling also prepares students for life in capitalist work environments, for instance by conditioning children to endure boredom, or by teaching teenagers enrolled in "business skills" courses how to prepare resumes, photocopy documents, and perform other menial tasks related to low-ranking corporate jobs. As Gelderloos (2010a) observes, "The most important lessons consistently taught by schools under the state are to obey arbitrary authority, to accept the imposition of other people's priorities on our lives, and to stop daydreaming. When children start school, they are self-guided, curious about the world they live in, and believe everything is possible. When they finish, they are cynical, self-absorbed, and used to dedicating forty hours of their week to an activity they never chose" (p. 97).

These examples are the tip of the iceberg; corruptions of information power occur so often and in so many settings that it becomes hard to envision their scope. As Martin (1998) observes, "Information plays a role in nearly every field of human activity, from art to industry, and all of these are subject to the corruptions of power" (p. 5). This is hardly a recent development in human affairs. Religious and political authorities have gathered, produced, shaped, and/or exercised control over information for millennia, historically restricting access and interpretative rights to groups such as the priesthood, who claim to have privileged knowledge of divine truths. Turning to a more recent example, in the 20th century, authoritarian states amassed enormous troves of information about their populations, geographies, natural resources, and so on, in order to impose what James C. Scott (1998) describes as large-scale "schemes to improve the human condition," such as forced collectivization in Russia, which ended disastrously. Of

course, there is another side to this coin: Radical anti-capitalists have also taken great pains to gather, organize, and share information about their enemies, capitalism and the state, in order to provide intellectual weapons to proletarians as well as other radicals (Cleaver 1979; Negri 1984/1991). Karl Marx's (1867/1967) magnum opus *Capital*, after all, is not a purely theoretical critique of capitalism; it is based on thirty years of observation and overflows with real-world data, especially from England, which was ground zero for the industrial revolution and social forces that Marx was concerned with theorizing about.

Informational power cannot be understood separately from the technological systems used to gather, store, retrieve, and disseminate or communicate information; technologies thus constitute another important dimension of all systems of power (Beniger 1986; CrimethInc n.d.; Gordon 2008; Innis 1950/1972; 1951; Postman 1992; Schiller 1969/1992; Smythe 1981; Winner 1986). Here it is useful to introduce interrelated terms:

- *Artifacts* refer to constructed objects which help people simplify tasks, such as hammers and computers. Artifacts allow people to embed knowledge in material things and are what most people think of when they hear the word 'technology' (Martin 2015, p. 11).
- *Technology* refers to artifacts and their associated social relations, such as the processes used to design and manufacture products (ibid.). Technology is the application of science, mathematics, engineering, and other kinds of knowledge to problem solving.

- *Technological ensembles* refer to collections of objects that operate together. This can include cars, computers, and—on a wider scale—systems of roads and telephone cables (ibid.).
- The term *socio-technological complex* refers to "interlocking systems of human-machine interfaces that fix human behavior, sustaining and enhancing inequalities of wealth and power" (Gordon 2008, p. 111).

Technologies allow societies to embed scientific knowledge in artifacts such as machines and computers; some play an important role in greasing the wheels of state-corporate power and range from the mundane, such as electronic toll booths which capture images of license plates in order to bill commuters, to the truly horrifying, such as the IBM punch card systems Germany used to facilitate the Holocaust (Black 2001). Information and technology are so closely linked that, virtually by definition, an anarchist theory of news media—or of any other system in which information features prominently—must also consider the role of technology and the relationship between different forms of technology and anarchist politics.

Many of anarchism's early exponents were optimistic about technology's role in post-capitalist societies, and endorsed technological progress so long as it could lead to improvements in material human conditions. For instance, Kropotkin (1906/1990) argued that new technologies could reduce the intensity and dangers associated with grueling industrial labor such as coal mining, as well as shorten the average work day to four hours. Similarly, anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist writers have argued at length that libertarian socialism is logically appropriate for advanced industrial societies—indeed, that complex societies necessitate anarchist forms of social organization—whereas democratic capitalism and state socialism are hugely inefficient, wasteful, and destructive political-economic systems (Bookchin 1970/2004; Chomsky 1970/2005; 2005; de

Santillan 1937/1996; Dolgoff 1974; 2001; Maximoff 1927/1985; Rocker 1938/2004; Sheppard 2003a; 2003b). In the words of the anarcho-syndicalist Sam Dolgoff (2001),

> The increasing complexity of society is making anarchism *more* and *not less* relevant to modern life. It is precisely this complexity and diversity, and above all their overriding concern for freedom and human values, that led the anarchist thinkers [Proudhon, Bakunin, and Kropotkin] to base their ideas on the principles of diffusion of power, self-management, and federalism (p. 5; emphasis in original).

The anarchist ecologist Murray Bookchin (1970/2004) has even argued that modern industrial production technologies could allow humans to surpass the constraints imposed by material scarcity, which raises the prospect for post-scarcity anarchy.

More often than not, such arguments assume that industrialism and technology are basically neutral, but have been corrupted by hierarchical forces such as the state and capitalism. Most contemporary anarchists consider this view to be antiquated, deluded, or even dangerous. Indeed, within the anarchist milieu, certain tendencies—notably green anarchism and anarcho-primitvism—are deeply antagonistic towards technology, industrialism, modernism, and even civilization itself. However, as Gordon (2008) notes, these critiques have generated so much controversy within anarchist circles that it is impossible to use anarcho-primitivism as a basis for launching a broad-based anarchist critique of technology. Rather than simplistically describing anarchism and anarchists as either for or against technology, he argues that contemporary anarchists express a "curious ambivalence" in their relationships with it, characterized by both rejection and endorsement (pp. 109-111). Instead of recasting primitivist criticisms of technology and civilization, or syndicalist faith in a "liberated industrial modernity," Gordon draws on academic works by David Noble (1993), Paul Edwards (2003), Langdon Winner (1986), and other writers who specialize in science and technology studies, in order to develop an

anarchist critique which takes into consideration how social and political values shape scientific research and technological innovation, and how these in turn affect society.

As Gordon (2008) observes, academic scholarship in this area is nearly unified around the position that, far from being neutral, technologies are powerful social forces which "both express and reproduce specific patterns of social organisation and cultural interaction," fixing "social relations into material reality." Extant technologies and infrastructures condition whether and how new technologies become integrated into the socio-technological complex. Under capitalism, newly introduced technologies will typically express and help reproduce capitalist hierarchies.

> On the macro level, new technologies must be integrated into an existing socio-technological complex, and as a result are imprinted with its strong bias in favour of certain patterns of human interaction. This bias inevitably shapes the design of these technologies and the ends towards which they will be deployed. Because of the inequalities of wealth and power in society, the process of technical development itself is so thoroughly biased in a particular direction that it regularly produces results that favour certain social interests.
>
> One does not need to be an anarchist to see that the constraints created by the existing socio-technological complex and its infrastructures have a specifically exploitative and authoritarian nature. … The capitalist bias of modern society is also abundantly present in the mindsets shaping technological development. Today in every developed country, corporations exert a great deal of influence on every stage of the technological research, design and implementation process (p. 117).

It is difficult to describe nuclear weapons and closed-circuit video surveillance systems as "neutral," when these technologies are clearly intended to undermine resistance to state-corporate power. Indeed, destructive technologies such as weapons of mass destruction can only be used by strong states civilian populations; these weapons have no defensive purpose and are inseparable from regimes of domination. Many other taken-for-granted technologies and technological ensembles ostensibly aid society while

actually reinforcing hierarchies and systems of domination. As Gelderloos (2010) observes,

> It is no coincidence that the nuclear arms and energy infrastructure creates a need for a centrally organized, high security military organization and disaster management agencies with emergency powers and the ability to suspend constitutional rights; that interstate highways allow the rapid deployment of the military, encourage the transcontinental shipping of goods and private transportation via personal automobiles; that new factories demand unskilled, replaceable laborers who couldn't possibly hold the job until retirement (assuming the boss even wanted to give retirement benefits) because within a few years occupational injuries from repetitive tasks or the unsafe pace of the production line will render them unable to continue (p. 102).

Generally speaking, new technologies which attempt to cut against this grain are not considered viable (Gordon 2008; Noble 1984; 1993). This is why, for instance, companies discourage consumers from installing non-proprietary operating systems on their computers, cell phones, or other electronic devices, and why sustainable, durable consumer goods are anathema to capitalism. Rather than develop and market items which will continue to be useful for several years or decades, companies purposefully produce goods based on fashion trends or on the notion of "planned obsolescence," i.e., the policy of designing products with artificially shortened shelf lives in order to hasten future sales of products. Manufacturers frequently render automobiles, computers, and other appliances obsolete by unveiling new models or by discontinuing replacement parts and accessories. Not only does this inefficiency endemic to capitalism promote consumerist behaviors, helping to keep people in financial debt or otherwise drain their pocketbooks, but the waste generated by planned obsolescence contributes to catastrophic ecological problems (Packard 1960; Sheppard 2003b; Slade 2006).

On the other hand, Gordon (2008) observes, certain technologies arguably "have inherent features that encourage decentralisation and localism" (p. 119). Compare, for

example, technologies which harness solar and wind energy to those based on extracting coal, oil, and natural gas. Whereas people can install solar panels and/or windmills nearly anywhere on the planet, fossil fuel reserves are unequally distributed across regions, making them susceptible to centralized control by states and corporations. From an anarchist perspective, solar and wind energy are preferable to fossil fuels because they are more compatible with decentralization and localism. Certain technologies also promote personal and community empowerment better than others do, especially when it comes to acquiring skillsets or expertise of the technologies themselves. For example, although in a capitalist society there might be advantages to commuting by car instead of by bicycle, generally speaking, bikes are much easier to repair or maintenance, as well as leave a smaller carbon footprint. An anarchist approach to technology would empower people by giving individuals "maximum support to develop their capacities" (Martin 2015, p. 11-12).

Mainstream writers often assume that humans can manage how technologies emerge and develop, but attempts to democratize and decentralize them are doomed to fail. Against this view—technological determinism—Gordon (2008) and Martin (2015) argue that, even though most technologies are highly compatible with systems based on hierarchical authority and forms of social control, not all of them are. Anarchists and other radicals frequently harness, create, and/or repurpose technologies and infrastructures with an eye toward promoting mutual aid, autonomy, freedom, self-reliance, and resistance to domination and authority. For instance, even though the Internet was originally developed by the U.S. Department of Defense and is today heavily commercialized, contemporary anarchists routinely use the Internet and digital technologies such as cell phones in their organizing and activism. In fact, observes Gordon (2008), "among social movements in the North anarchists have been making the

most extensive and engaged use of information and communications technologies, to the degree of developing their own software platforms" (ibid., p. 109). Elsewhere, he observes that the Internet appeals to many anarchists because the free exchange of information enables people to pool resources and effectively turn large portions of the web into an "electronic commons" (pp. 131-132).

CRITIQUE OF NEWS MEDIA AND IMPLICATIONS FOR STRATEGY

The anarchist analysis of information power and technology extends to mass news media, which have only grown in size and influence since the 19th century and now pervade the United States and other advanced capitalist societies. With inescapable reach, the mainstream press has effectively replaced the church as the main propagator of official information (Hedgecock 1990; Lull 2000; Thompson 1990). Even people who studiously avoid watching or reading the news feel its presence in their interactions with those who do. Moreover, its scale is global; since the 1990s, neoliberal trade policies—specifically the privatization and deregulation of foreign media markets—have enabled Western transnational media companies to undermine other countries' media systems and national sovereignty. The mass news media express and reproduce state and capitalist patterns of social organization: by interlocking with other state-corporate institutions, by distributing information premised on state-centric views of reality via ubiquitous communications technologies (print media, computers, television, radio, cell phones, tablets, etc.), and by participating as actors within the market (Altschull 1995; Herman & Chomsky 1988/2002; Herman 1995; 1996; 1999; McChesney 1997; 1999; 2004; Raboy & Bruck 1989). As a socio-technological complex, the mass news media undeniably

shape people's understandings of social-political, economic, and cultural reality, as well as their behavior, such as whether and how they decide to engage in political activity.

Leftwing and liberal academic cultural critics attuned to the rapid development and spread of surveillance and communications technologies have famously been more cynical than optimistic about the prospects for activating and spreading resistance within the media-saturated information societies of the United States and other advanced industrialized countries. Michel Foucault (1977), Herbert Marcuse (1964/1991), and Jean Baudrillard (1994; 1995), among others, consider resistance to the state or capital to be nearly impossible in these societies. Echoing Marshal McLuhan's (1964) technological determinism, Baudrillard in particular argues that media content is irrelevant and that the mass news media are capable of completely coopting or neutralizing dissent.[*] Some anarchists express similar sentiments, such as those who associate with post-Left, anti-organizational, and/or nihilist tendencies.

However, anarchism's premium on autonomy clashes with these critics' analyses, as well as any other view of power which does not admit of the possibility of resistance. Given these assumptions, it is fair to say that an anarchist approach to theorizing about news media and media-movement interactions would emphasize opportunities for exploiting features of media systems and/or using media to promote causes and build movement strength, rather than bemoan factors which limit dissent and resistance. The point is to identify cracks in the system, in order to widen them.

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[*] Among notable critics, Douglas Kellner (2010) argues that Baudrillard's view of media smacks of technological determinism. Against Baudrillard's "snide and glib" attitude toward alternative media, Kellner writes: "An alternative media system would provide the possibility for oppositional, counterhegemonic subcultures and groups to produce programs expressing their own views, oppositions, and struggles that resist the massification, homogenization, and passivity that Baudrillard and others attribute to the media. Alternative media allow marginal and oppositional voices to contest the view of the world, values, and life-styles of the mainstream, and make possible the circulation and growth of alternative subcultures and communities. Baudrillard's theoreticism, however, completely eschews cultural practice and becomes more and more divorced from the political struggles and issues of the day" (p. 200).

In this vein, the anarchist response to corruptions of information power, as Martin (1998) suggests, is *information liberation*. He writes: "In order to bring about a just and more equal society, struggles need to be waged over information. … Since the expression 'freedom of information' has been degraded [by politicians and government bureaucrats], perhaps it is better to talk of 'information liberation,' which is the general project of using information to move toward a society free of domination" (p. 172). Information liberation is of course a broad, nebulous objective. In addition to addressing the role of mass news media and communications technologies, the struggle for information liberation must also tackle issues such as surveillance, intellectual property, the political economy of research and academic scholarship, the roles of intellectuals, and how states and corporations collect and use information.

As far as news media goes, these issues stand out as especially relevant: state-corporate versus alternative constructions of reality, participation in meaning making, access to information, and ownership and control over the institutions which produce and shape news.

Status Quo Constructions of Reality

The mass news media shape policies and public attitudes by providing economic, political, and cultural information to a large audience. However, they do not frame or construct reality disinterestedly or "objectively," as many journalists claim. From an anarchist perspective, *who* shapes the news matters at least as much as the information being conveyed. As Martin (1988) observes, "Powerful groups, especially governments and large corporations, shape the news in a range of ways, such as by providing selected information, offering access to stories in exchange for favourable coverage, spreading

disinformation and threatening reprisals" (p. 8). Rather than employ news frames or present information that could help move toward a society based on principles such as mutual aid, diversity, solidarity, liberty, and equality, the mainstream press preserves the status quo, by serving as a conduit for elite perspectives and information that reinforces powerful institutions (Altschull 1995; Herman & Chomsky 1988/2002; Kaufman 2003; McChesney 1999; 2004; Martin 1998). This is by far the mass news media's most salient corruption of informational power.

Several critics use this as a launching point to identify perceived conservative and/or liberal biases in the mainstream press (e.g., Alterman 2003; Brock 2004; Coulter 2002; Franken 2003; Goldberg 2001; Stossel 2004). However, it is barely worth examining whether the mainstream press exhibits a liberal or conservative bias, because anarchism does not see much difference between the two; neither liberal nor conservative news outlets challenge the fundamental assumptions underpinning state-corporate power (Chomsky 1989; Herman & Chomsky 1988/2002). The Republican and Democratic parties merely represent competing factions within a larger, pro-business party (Ferguson 1995). Moreover, focusing on liberal and/or conservative biases skirts more pressing issues, such as the institutional structure of mass news media, as well as suggests reformist rather than radical solutions, such as pressuring individual news companies to fire or reprimand individual journalists, or to alter editorial policies. It is not that reform efforts are pointless, as it is certainly the case that liberal and conservative biases matter in certain contexts (i.e., news coverage of domestic issues such as abortion or immigration). Hiring and firing decisions within media companies also matter (Cohen 2006). Nevertheless, analyses that center on liberal versus conservative bias hardly get to the root of things.

A key task for anti-capitalist radicals is to undermine the credibility of the mainstream press and promote counter-narratives and analyses, i.e., alternative constructions of reality (Atton 2002; Atton & Hamilton 2008; Downing 2001; Hedgecock 1990; Jensen 2001; Martin 1998; Ryan 1991). An anarchist account of news media would stress the importance of creating alternative/activist/independent media and propaganda in building causes and revolutionary movements.* Of course, this is not exactly a novel suggestion: radical media makers and sympathetic scholars have said as much, at length, for decades. As anarchist media maker Jen Angel (2008), cofounder of the influential activist magazine *Clamor*, explains:

> Activists need ways to communicate with other activists, with supporters, and with the general public. We need media that is our own to provide space for inter-movement discussion and self-critique, to celebrate our own culture and victories, to record our own history, to critique dominant society, to distribute news not covered by mainstream outlets, and to expose people to radicalism. Media serves to strengthen and support our movements, and its role in the success of any movement cannot be underestimated (p. 7).

Radicals throughout history have expressed similar motivations for producing and distributing their own news media products (Armstrong 1981; Downing 2001; Gitlin 1980; Kessler 1984; McChesney & Scott 2004; Ostertag 2006; Streitmatter 2001). In addition to providing space for diverse, anti-elite viewpoints, activist and alternative media are notable for their anti-corporate aesthetics and promotion of alternative cultural mores (Atton 2002; Atton & Hamilton 2008; Downing 2001, pp. 56-66; Waltz 2005, pp. 67-75). "Skilled activists use culture as an entry point into larger discussions of politics and theory, and use art and culture to celebrate victories and mourn losses," observes Angel (2008, p. 12).

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* Although the term 'propaganda' now carries a stigma due to its use by Germany and the United States during World Wars I and II (Bernays 1928/2005; Carey 1997), as anarchists and other radicals use the term it simply means information and argumentation aimed toward influencing others to accept a cause, political position, or idea.

Participation in Making Meaning

Anarchism challenges the mainstream press as well as other powerful institutions that control and/or mediate information flows, because it holds that direct, non-hierarchical communication is a necessary precondition for human freedom and development. As a powerful mediator of information, the mainstream press threatens liberty and autonomy. According to Rabin (1988),

> The greatest emphasis of anarchism must be on social relations. In fact, all anarchist relations have a social dimension. In order for people to be free, the relations between people must be free. People must interact directly with one another. People must not dominate one another. Mediation limits interaction, and hence the relations which are based on interaction. Mediation alienates people from one another and masks domination (p. 324).

Rather than facilitate non-hierarchical forms of communication between non-elite audience members, the mainstream news media are, for the most part, unidirectional; they convey elite perspectives to mass audiences, but do not much care to receive mass audience input (Thompson 1995). Nor does the mainstream press facilitate information flows between peoples of different nations, for instance by allowing ordinary Americans and Palestinians to share each other's perspectives on Israeli foreign policy.* Because the mainstream press defines newsworthiness based on the preferences of elite actors, as well as restricts participation in media making to a small class of so-called professional newsworkers, it is inherently undemocratic. Indeed, this important limitation to participation is built into the very structure of the mass news media (Altschull 1995; Herman & Chomsky 1988/2002; Martin 1998; Ryan 1991).

* For historical background and analysis of media coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict, as well as the critical U.S. role in undermining peace negotiations, see Chomsky (1999a), Finkelstein (2003), Friel & Falk (2007), and Zertal & Eldar (2007).

Because anarchism values forms of direct, non-hierarchical communication, anarchists and likeminded radicals propose using communications technologies and creating media that not only provide counter-narratives to those found in the mainstream press, but also diminish or erase power differentials between audiences and media makers (Angel 2008; Atton 2002; Atton & Hamilton 2008; Downing 2002). Many anarchists would likely agree with Douglas Kellner's (2010) sentiment, who writes:

> In a genuinely democratic society, mass media would be part of a communal public sphere and alternative media would be made accessible to all groups and individuals who wished to participate in media communication. This would presuppose dramatic expansion of media access and thus of media systems which would require more channels, technology, and a social commitment to democratic communication (p. 200).

Of course, we do not live in a genuinely democratic society, meaning activists must approach media-making cautiously. Cellphones, email, social media, and even more traditional forms of alternative media (such as newspapers, magazines, radio programs, etc.) may enable activists to quickly and easily spread ideas and information, but these can also open the door for state-corporate suppression. Nevertheless, activist/alternative media are essential for movement growth and stamina. As Angel (2008) explains, "It is necessary for all movements to have ways for people to talk with each other, share news, and strategize, which allows networks brought together around particular moments in time to build on each other and not rebuild continually. This is something inherently lacking in today's media landscape" (p. 10).

According to Andrew Hedgecock (1990), "An anarchist approach to cultural production would revolve around encouraging widespread participation in the production of alternative media and the erosion of categories like 'producer' (writer, artist, performer etc) and 'audience'" (p. 374). Such an approach would also seek to promote diverse views by providing a platform for those who have never produced media content before,

not just established writers and journalists. According to John Downing (2001), a multiplicity of perspectives enables media audiences to experience "multiple realities" of oppression, political/social/economic life, and culture. Countless activist and alternative media projects commit(ted) themselves to this ethos, including well-known ones such as *Clamor*, *Left Turn*, and *Z Magazine*, as well as the global network of Independent Media Centers (IMCs), which originated in the 1999 anti-WTO protests in Seattle and sprang up around the world soon afterward.*

Radically democratic in conception and execution, and frequently associated with anarchist politics, IMCs are organized as collectives in which decision-making power and journalistic responsibilities are shared equally. They are linked rhizomatically, without a central authority, and each IMC has complete autonomy relative to every other IMC. As Victor Pickard (2006) observes, "Despite an overall uniformity in website architecture and political ethos across Indymedia sites, there are significant differences among individual IMCs including but not limited to cultural particulars regarding editorial policy, membership criteria, and the size and location of the IMC" (p. 20). Exhorting audiences with the slogan "Don't hate the media; be the media," IMCs allow any person to contribute content as reporters, editors, and photographers (Kidd 2003; 2010; Pickard 2006; Wolfson 2012). The roots of Indymedia can be traced directly to U.S. radicals' solidarity work with the Zapatistas , who in 1996 "put forward a vision that directly linked the creation of an alternative communications infrastructure to the formation of a global social movement. … The core of the EZLN vision was that communications, particularly new media tools, should play a central role in connecting points of struggles across the world, cultivating a global social movement," according to Todd Wolfson

* As a matter of disclosure, I was a member of the Austin Indymedia editorial collective between June 2010 and June 2012. In addition to producing web content, our collective produced a weekly show for channelAustin, a local public access television channel. See http://austin.indymedia.org/

(2012, p. 150-151). Indymedia's emergence coincided with the advent of a global popular uprising against neoliberalism that placed communications technologies at the center of resistance efforts (Kidd 2003; 2010; Pickard 2006; Wolfson 2012). Indymedia activists were early combatants enmeshed in what Cleaver (1995) describes as the "electronic fabric of struggle." As Kidd (2010) observes,

> The global IMC represented a qualitative shift in the scope and scale of media power. Until then, alternative media had been limited by small-scale production, shut out from most of the capitalist circuits of distribution, and divided internally by the craft logics of capitalist industry (print, radio, public access television, video, and music). The IMC represented a leap beyond the monopoly control of production of corporate media. It was a recomposition of media makers, bringing together open source software hackers and technicians, alternative media and independent video producers, punks, and social justice communicators. All of these groups developed, in part, through the mass appropriation of sophisticated digital tools of production and circulation, and earlier collective experiments in their use (p. 200).

Despite starting off strong—the first IMC website received 1.5 million hits (more than CNN) in its first week—IMCs have been in decline for years, which critics attribute to their lack of original and/or investigative reporting, being overrun by right-wing content submissions and conspiracy theorists, IMC contributors being stretched too thin, and a widespread perception on the Left that Indymedia simply doesn't matter anymore (Uzelman 2014; Whitney 2005). Furthermore, access to technology does not necessarily mean that contributors will write well, or produce content that will interest readers. It is also much easier for activist groups and movements to create their own forms of online media today than it was in 1999, owing to the proliferation of free publishing software tools such as Drupal and Wordpress, accessible corporate options such as Tumblr and Facebook, and more familiarity with what the available options are. These and other digital communications technologies are integral to contemporary activism (Castells 2012; Earl & Kimport 2011; Harlow & Guo 2014; Harlow & Harp 2012; McCaughey &

Ayers 2003). For instance, a recent web survey conducted among 100 activists in the United States and Latin America found that nearly all of them use Facebook and approximately half use Twitter; respondents also reported that social media were important for organizing, mobilizing, and promoting debate, regardless of whether their activism occurred offline or online (Harlow & Harp 2012). Although IMCs are no longer as influential as they once were, they leave an important legacy, as many contemporary activist publications and social justice groups reflect a commitment to the anarchist values and practices articulated by Indymedia (Giraud 2014; Uzelman 2014; Whitney 2005).

Access to Diverse Views and Information

An anarchist view of news media would also promote widespread access to diverse views and news content. Even though digital technologies reduce production and distribution barriers that confront more traditional forms of alternative media (i.e., radio, television, and print), which greatly enables the proliferation of radical media online, powerful mediators still influence who actually views this content. According to web analytics, people rely less on search engines and home pages, and more frequently on social media to discover news content online. Social media drives nearly a third of all web traffic to news websites, outstripping organic search engines (Shareaholic 2015). These means that Facebook and other companies which have amassed vast amounts of data about their users—concerning people's personal tastes, online habits, friendships, and other aspects of their private lives—actively shape the kinds of information and range of opinions people are exposed to. Social media advocates may believe that users enjoy limitless options regarding news consumption, when in reality corporate algorithms

have narrowed the field of available options by customizing advertising, news, and entertainment for media audiences (Turow 2011).

Furthermore, a digital divide persists between those who do and do not have regular access to information and communications technologies, which limits exposure to activist-made media. Among media-makers, anarchists and fellow travelers have been very sensitive to this. Describing *Clamor*'s decision to produce a print magazine, Angel (2008) observes, "Not only are print magazines and zines relatively inexpensive for consumers, they put out new information often (as opposed to books or DVDs), don't require special equipment for the average person to decipher, and can be taken on a bus, into the bathroom, on an airplane, or into the woods" (p. 10). Print media may also be used as organizing tools, especially at demonstrations and on college campuses, where activists and organizers can use magazines and newspapers as conversation starters.

However, some anarchists are skeptical of well-meaning attempts to bring more people into the digital fold. CrimethInc. (n.d.), an anonymous anarchist collective, warns readers that:

> The project of computerizing the masses recapitulates and extends the unification of humanity under capitalism. No project of integration has ever extended as widely or penetrated as deeply as capitalism, and the digital will soon fill its entire space. …
>
> To integrate is not necessarily to equalize: the leash, the rein, and the whip are also connective. Even where it connects, the digital divides.
>
> Like capitalism, the digital divides haves from have-nots. But a computer is not what the has-not lacks. The has-not lacks power, which is not apportioned equally by digitization. Rather than a binary of capitalists and proletarians, a universal market is emerging in which each person will be ceaselessly evaluated and ranked. Digital technology can impose power differentials more thoroughly and efficiently than any caste system in history.

Today, a small handful of corporations—including News Corp, Comcast, Bertelsmann, Viacom, Disney, Time Warner, CBS, Gannett, Google, and others—control the vast majority of the nation's communications systems and media, including major book retailers and distributors.* This impacts where and how activists and citizens can access alternative media, which has motivated anarchists and other radical media makers to seek alternative distribution channels, especially those which allow publications to reduce waste, bypass major distributors and corporate bookstore chains such as Barnes & Noble, and directly connect with the activists, groups, and movements they intend to serve. Although publications such as *Monthly Review*, *Z Magazine*, and *In These Times* can still be found in the magazine aisles of major bookstores, more recent experiments in radical media such as *Left Turn* and anarchist groups such as CrimethInc. have created grassroots distribution models premised on sending bulk copies to supporters in different cities, who may decide to give them away for free, sell them at-cost, or use them to raise funds for local radical projects (Angel 2008, pp. 27-28).† Anarchist publishers and distribution groups such as AK Press‡, Little Black Cart§, Active Distribution**, and others also present opportunities for radical media makers to circumvent the distribution channels of corporate capitalism and deliver media products to English-speaking audiences.

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* For more information on individual media companies and their holdings, see the "Who Owns the Media?" resource maintained by Free Press: http://www.freepress.net/ownership/chart

† Inspired by *Left Turn*, while working on a newsprint magazine called *The New Texas Radical*, our editorial collective decided upon a similar distribution scheme, in which activists throughout Texas could purchase bulk copies of TNTR at-cost plus the price of shipping. Some issues included a suggested cover price of $2.00, plus an additional "solidarity price" of $3.00. Later on, a friend informed me that he had stumbled across several copies of the magazine at a local bookstore – hardly unusual, except that he was in Guatemala.

‡ See http://www.akpress.org/ and http://www.akuk.com/

§ See http://littleblackcart.com/

** See http://www.activedistributionshop.org/

Ownership and Organization

McChesney (1997) writes that, "In democratic societies the manner by which the media system is structured, controlled and subsidized is of central political importance. Control over the means of communication is an integral aspect of political and economic power" (p. 6). Anarchists and other radical critics trace many of the corruptions of mass news media to its ownership by capitalists. Inasmuch as anarchists believe that something like the mass news media should even exist, which is far from obvious, they argue there should be popular control over it—just as there should be popular control over schools, banks, churches, and society's other central institutions. Capitalist news companies are also organized hierarchically, which anarchism opposes, with owners, publishers, and high-ranking editors near the top and various levels of reporters, editors, and other media makers working below them. Those near the top of the hierarchy have greater influence over information output than those near the bottom, i.e., through story assignments and editorial decisions (Bagdikian 2004; Herman & Chomsky 1988/2002).

A century ago, it was not uncommon for socialist, Marxist, and even anarchist publications to replicate the basic internal structure of most other small, political publications, i.e., a stable of contributors submitted content to one or two people responsible for editing and publishing the newspaper or magazine. Since the 1960s, however, anarchists and other radical media makers have consciously moved away from traditional top-down structures and toward collective ownership models, as well as made an effort to include more people in the editing and production processes (Atton 2002; Atton & Hamilton 2008; Downing 2002; McMillian 2011). As *Z Magazine* co-founder Michael Albert (1997) argues, "Being alternative can't just mean that the institution's editorial focus is on this or that topical area. And being alternative as an institution certainly isn't just being left or right or different in editorial content. Being alternative as

an institution must have to do with how the institution is organized and works." He proposes the following:

- Alternative media should reduce income differentials between media makers, and not endow some with more power than others.
- Alternative media should assign comparable tasks and reduce disparities in work conditions, so that media makers have comparable quality of life.
- Alternative media should reduce and eliminate hierarchies where possible. "Means of decision making should be participatory and democratic with the goal, broadly understood, that participants should affect decisions proportionately to the degree they are in turn affected by them. But also, circumstances of work (and training) should empower all participants so that their voting rights are not a formality but instead each participant has the information, confidence, time, and security to develop their opinions, present them, and effectively champion them, when need be" (ibid.).
- Alternative media should embody feminist and multicultural aims by working to reduce gender- and race-based disparities between media makers.
- Alternative media should try to reach a broad, socially relevant audience rather than advertisers and those with disposable income. "Relations with audience should respect and promote the same values and norms internally pursued, particularly those of openness, dialogue, and full communication" (ibid.).
- Alternative media should work to support other alternative media projects.

Albert writes that his view of alternative media promotes "sensitivity to issues of class relations and economic structure and a sense of mutual solidarity and outreach" (ibid.). His view is rooted in participatory economics, or parecon, an anarchist economic vision premised on participatory decision making, whose underlying values are solidarity,

equity, diversity, workers' self-management, and efficiency (Albert 2003; 2006a; 2006b; Hahnel 2005). His view is purist and rather stringent, because it implies that publications such as *The Nation* and *Mother Jones*, which feature top-down editorial structures, are in some sense not really alternative media. Media scholar Chris Atton (2002), whose writings also reflect a commitment to anarchist politics, takes a different approach; he argues that media may feature different degrees of alterity according to their products and processes. These products (1-3) and processes (4-6) include:

1. *Content*, such as that which is politically or socially radical or promotes dissident views (Downing 2001; Kessler 1984; Ostertag 2006; Streitmatter 2001).
2. *Form*, which includes alternative visual elements and other aesthetic qualities (Duncombe 2001).
3. *Reprographic innovations*, i.e., the use of different technologies (for instance, photocopiers or stencils and spray paint) to produce media (Atton 2002; Duncombe 2001).
4. *Distributive use*, or the use of alternative and clandestine distribution networks, as well as rejection of copyright laws (Atton 2002).
5. *Transformed social relations, roles, and responsibilities*, which includes alternative media institutions that organize non-hierarchically and emphasize deprofessionalization of journalists (Albert 1997; Atton 2002).
6. *Transformed communication processes*, such as horizontal linkages with social movements and activists (Atton 2002; Downing 2001; Kessler 1984; Ostertag 2006; Streitmatter 2001).

In addition, academic theorists have conceptualized alternative media as oppositional media (Downing 1984), as radical media (Downing 2001), as citizens' media (Rodríguez 2001), and as community media (Howley 2005). From an anarchist perspective, Albert (1997) and Atton's (2002) accounts are notable because they imply that alternative media production and distribution are forms of prefigurative political direct action, which not only address access and participation problems inherent in mass news media,* but also the corporate structure of corporate news media institutions themselves. Again quoting Angel (2008):

> By creating and maintaining media institutions that are accessible to everyone, that present readers with diverse ideas and concepts so they can make informed decisions, and allow us to connect with each other, we are building institutions that prefigure a better world, that show us what it could look like. By building viable alternative institutions and providing concrete examples on how society could be run, we help challenge the dominant structure (sometimes this is called a "dual power" strategy) (pp. 7-8).

* Downing (2001) mentions prefigurative politics in his section on anarchist media, but it is not central to his conception of alternative media, whereas it is clearly a major point of interest for Albert (1997) and Atton (2002).

Chapter 3: Doing Activist Communications Research

Despite academic researchers' claims to impartiality or overt political commitments to worthy causes and movements, anarchists, insurgents, and other anti-capitalist activists are often wary of scholarly attempts at documenting, theorizing about, or otherwise examining social movements and communities in struggle. For instance, anarchist writer Peter Gelderloos (2010b) describes universities as "elite institutions engaged in the softer areas of counterinsurgency," and writes: "…with or without valid arguments, people in the streets and people in prison know instinctually and from experience that *academics are not their allies*" (p. 43; emphasis mine). Although his remarks may appear strident, Gelderloos speaks for many anti-capitalist radicals who, far from mechanically rejecting academia and intellectual work, base their skeptical attitudes in a searching critique of universities, institutionally affiliated researchers, and academic scholarship. However, as outsiders to academia, their critiques leave small impacts, mainly at the fringes of the humanities and social sciences.* When confronted by these challengers, most academics easily choose to ignore them, citing their independence and need for appropriate scholarly distance as justification – a predictable response from those who have spent years undergoing the professionalization process and acculturating to academe (Schmidt 2000).

For academic researchers who consider themselves movement allies, though, and who believe that scholarship can and, perhaps more importantly, *should* play a constructive role in the movements they study, it is not so easy to sidestep radicals' criticisms. If movement allies within the academy hope to build rapport, trust, mutual understanding, and solidarity with activists outside the ivory tower, they will need to take

* Of course, arguably, academia's radical insiders also fail to have much impact.

seriously the latter's concerns – even if this means surrendering their perceived status as objective, neutral observers, or casting themselves as combative to their colleagues or the universities that employ them.

Moreover, a main goal of this study is to show what anarchist thought and practice may contribute to activist discourse and communications research about commercial news media power, alternative media, and social movements. As noted earlier, Graeber (2004) writes that "Anarchism has tended to be an ethical discourse about revolutionary practice" (p. 6). Revolutionary practice includes, among other things, articulating movement ideas and concerns. For the anarchist academic engaged in communications research—a field in which mainstream, "embedded intellectuals" rather than critical or radical scholars hold sway (Bratich 2007)—the politically situated character of knowledge production poses several moral, epistemic, and political concerns. That is, *how* one generates ideas is often as important as the ideas themselves.

To that end, this chapter examines four sources of friction between scholars and anti-capitalists, which challenge radical communications scholars and other social science researchers who study social movements, insurgency, and activism. These are: a distinction between scholarly/academic work and radical intellectual activity; academics' class position; the troubling relationship between power and expertise; and academics' privileged space in knowledge production. The fourth concern is the focus of this chapter, which leads into a discussion of administrative, critical, and possibly radical approaches to communications research; still, the first three deserve brief examination. Although there are dozens, perhaps hundreds of different threads to pull in the tapestry of activist argumentation against the academy, these stand out as especially important considerations for researchers captivated by the ideas of anarchists and other anti-capitalist radicals.

ACADEMIC WORK VS. RADICAL INTELLECTUAL ACTIVITY

Scholars and academics are often conflated with intellectuals, but they are not necessarily the same and it is useful to distinguish between the two. By *scholars* and *academics*, I mean researchers employed by universities and colleges, who teach, research, perform service for institutions of higher learning, and otherwise contribute to fields of study as members of an academic community. By *intellectuals*, I mean people who reflect on society, culture, and life, who engage in "intellectual activity, reading, researching, writing, editing, and discussing ideas, all to a much higher degree than most people," (Stein 2001, p. 43) paid or unpaid for this activity, and independently of their relationship to institutions of higher learning. According to the late anarchist sociologist Howard Ehrlich (2001), a scholar "is dedicated to the specialized study of objects and events. … The scholar's primary, and primarily obsessive concern is with their [sic] (usually narrow) domain of study." Ehrlich considers an intellectual, on the other hand, to be "a person who likes to play with ideas. All ideas, any ideas: playing with ideas through discussion, observation, reading, writing, are the intellectual's obsession. Discussion and acquisition of knowledge are ends in themselves" (p. 46). Scholars and intellectuals are not mutually exclusive groups. Academics may engage in intellectual activity, and some intellectuals may be academics – but they may also be teachers, writers, doctors, computer programmers, plumbers, custodians, artists, musicians, electricians, farmers, and so on.[*] Academics and intellectuals alike may espouse reactionary or revolutionary ideas.

[*] For instance, few anarchists know that the anarchist intellectual Sam Dolgoff (1902-1990) worked as a house painter his entire life. As a leading voice for anarcho-syndicalism in the United States, Dolgoff wrote prolifically about anarchism and workers' movements, edited books on anarchist theory and history, and co-founded and served as an editor for *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review* until his death.

Anarchists and other radical anti-capitalists have an uneasy relationship with both academics and intellectuals, but on the whole they tend to be harder on academics. There are important reasons for this. First, membership within the academic community is reasonably clear-cut. In addition to producing a distinct cultural product, i.e., academic scholarship, most academics hold graduate degrees, institutional affiliations, memberships within scholarly associations, and other hallmarks of professional status, which require significant economic underpinnings. Meanwhile, radical anti-capitalists do not always identify intellectuals within their own ranks as such – especially in circles where intellectuals and intellectualism are viewed with distaste or scorn.

Second, for the most part academics tend to examine narrow questions for small audiences. As a result, academic scholarship rarely connects with or generates ideas of interest to activists, insurgents, and social movement participants. Expressions of intellectual activity, on the other hand, tend to be more down to earth, unbounded by disciplinary norms, more likely to be of interest to academia's outsiders, and more likely to have a "real world" import or vitality. According to cultural critic Jack Miles (1999), the division of labor within academia and universities applies constant pressure on academics to "suppress random curiosity and foster, instead, only a carefully channeled, disciplined curiosity." Without this pressure, an intellectual has more freedom to be an "explorer and generalist." This in part is reinforced by the need to publish regularly in approved academic journals. As a result, Miles writes: "An academic is a specialist who has disciplined his curiosity to operate largely within a designated area, while an intellectual is a generalist who deliberately does otherwise" (p. 313).

Of course, recognizing that radicals can also be intellectuals does little to assuage concerns about the influence of intellectuals in movements or strong state societies. Indeed, this is a main point of contention between anarchists and Marxists. Well before

the "new working class" debates of the 1970's (discussed below), the revolutionary anarchist Mikhail Bakunin warned in 1872 that Marxism would lead to complex, bureaucratic government that required and gave privileged position to intellectuals and experts. In his words:

> This government will not content itself with administering and governing the masses politically, as all governments do today. It will also administer the masses economically, concentrating in the hands of the State the production and division of wealth, the cultivation of land, the establishment and development of factories, the organization and direction of commerce, and finally the application of capital to production by the only banker—the State. All that will demand an immense knowledge and many heads "overflowing with brains" in this government. It will be the reign of scientific intelligence, the most aristocratic, despotic, arrogant, and elitist of all regimes. There will be a new class, a new hierarchy of real and counterfeit scientists and scholars, and the world will be divided into a minority ruling in the name of knowledge, and an immense ignorant majority. And then, woe unto the mass of ignorant ones! (Bakunin 1980, p. 319).

A student of Bakunin, Noam Chomsky (1966/1987; 1967/2003) argues that the intelligentsia—the social class of intellectuals who lend ideological support to the state and capitalist institutions—is antagonistic to movements and social change that elites cannot control.* According to Chomsky (1987), the ideas of anarchism—which rejects hierarchies and concentrations of power—do not appeal to the intelligentsia, whose "natural ideology is one that gives a major role to state power, whether it's state socialism, or welfare-state capitalism, or military-state capitalism of the Reagan variety" (p. 20). Anarchism does not offer these intellectuals the power and privilege they crave, and in fact undermines their position. Chomsky's view of the intelligentsia also helps explain why historically there have been proportionally fewer anarchist intellectuals than Marxist and Leninist intellectuals. Marxism-Leninism appeals to intellectuals because "it

* As Chomsky and others argue (e.g., Schmidt 2000), institutions such as graduate school and prestige newspapers also play important roles in presocializing members of the intelligentsia on behalf of state and capitalist institutions.

offers justification for their rise to positions of power and manipulation in the course of popular struggles which they can exploit and subvert. When such hopes are seen to be illusory, it has been an easy transition to celebration of liberal capitalism and association with or service to its dominant elites" (p.19-20).*

It comes as no surprise, then, that some contemporary anarchists reject the idea that intellectuals should have *any* role to play in movements or activism. As Jeff Stein (2001) observes, "The present anarchist movement does not place value on rationality and science. The tendency in our movement since the 1960s has been to equate rationalism with the horrors of modern warfare, police surveillance, and ecological destruction. …[M]any anarchists quite seriously extol the virtues of ignorance and superstition, which have the advantage of being low tech" (Stein 2001, p. 43-4). Needless to say, this is an untenable position for anarchists within the academy. Not only does it deny the autonomy of radical intellectuals, but if intellectuals have no roles to play in movements, the conversation ends here.

Among the anarchists and anti-capitalists who *do* see a role for intellectuals in social movements, they challenge academics to become politically engaged, anti-authoritarian intellectuals who bring their intellect and talents to bear on the problems that societies and movements face. That is to say, these anarchists contend that radical intellectuals can and should play important roles in building social movements and revolutions. As Graeber (2004) puts it, one "obvious role for a radical intellectual" is "to

* Of course, Chomsky is perhaps oversimplifying the issue when he claims that the transition from Marxist to liberal capitalist ideology is simple. Notable examples of Marxists-turned-conservatives include figures such as Whitaker Chambers, Max Eastman, David Horowitz, and Marvin Olasky. Following conservative critics such as Friedrech Hayek (1949) and Robert Nozick (1998), who scapegoated intellectuals for harboring leftwing or socialist sympathies, Horowitz (2006) argues that liberals and leftists dominate universities and mass media. Such arguments ignore that liberal and conservative members of the intelligentsia alike undermine socialist values by colluding with violent, oppressive state policies (Chomsky 1967/1987).

look at those who are creating viable alternatives, try to figure out what might be the larger implications of what they are (already) doing, and then offer those ideas back, not as prescriptions, but as contributions, possibilities—gifts" (p.12). According to Shukaitis (2004), "The task of the utopian theorist is that of acting as a diplomat between struggles, sharing wisdom and experiences, connecting and synthesizing ideas created through everyday experience, and offer [sic] such back to the community" (p. 11). Ehrlich (2001) describes these kinds of radical intellectuals as "the map makers for the movement" (p. 47). Writing for a primarily anarchist audience, Stein (2001) argues:

> The appropriate role of intellectuals is to contribute according to their ability, to do what intellectuals do already: to research, write, debate and educate on behalf of the anarchist movement. To engage in anarchist intellectual activity is to help other anarchists discover what they need to know to build an anarchist movement, and eventually, to discover what we all need to know to create a more libertarian society (p. 43).

Similarly, when asked what role he sees for the intellectual in an anarchist society, Chomsky (1987) replies:

> That of intellectual worker. A person whose work happens to be more with the mind than with the hands. Although I would think that in a decent society there ought to be a mixture of the kinds of work that one does. Marx would agree in principle. An anarchist picture of society, or anarchist tendencies within society, offer no privileged role to the organized intelligentsia or to the professional intellectuals. And, in fact, it would tend to blur the distinctions between intellectual and worker, so that workers should take a direct, active role in the mental aspects of whatever work they're doing, its organization and planning, formation of its purposes, and so on. The people whose major professional concern is knowledge and the application of knowledge would have no special opportunity to manage the society, to gain any position of power and prestige by virtue of this special training and talent. And that's not a point of view that the intelligentsia are naturally drawn to (p. 21).

Stein and Chomsky's understandings have much in common with Antonio Gramsci's (1971) conception of *organic intellectuals* who can articulate the ideas, interests, and experiences of the proletariat – as opposed to *traditional intellectuals* who

see themselves as a disinterested class of thinkers apart from society. More recently, Chomsky draws a distinction between dissident intellectuals who betray powerful institutions and those who behave as commissars, supporting the status quo and its crimes.*

CLASS LOCATION OF ACADEMICS AND INTELLECTUALS

Radical intellectuals have always forged a complex, ambiguous relationship with other revolutionary anti-capitalists and members of the working class, both as revolutionary actors and as categories within class analyses. On the one hand, historically, countless intellectually gifted women and men have been responsible for articulating, extending, and promulgating revolutionary ideas. It is doubtful, for instance, that Marxism would have emerged and eventually taken hold were it not for the Young Hegelians. Likewise, defenders of anarchist and socialist ideas have included intellectual giants such as Bertrand Russell (1918; 1920), Albert Einstein (1949/1954), and Noam Chomsky (1970/2005; 2005). On the other hand, as Erik Olin Wright (1979) observes,

> [T]he very fact that most intellectuals are not unambiguously part of the working class has meant that they have always been viewed with suspicion within revolutionary movements. Although as individuals, intellectuals might be totally committed to a revolutionary project, as a social category intellectuals occupy privileged positions within bourgeois ideological relations and often privileged positions within bourgeois economic relations as well (pp. 191-2).

The ambiguous class position of college-educated intellectuals, academics, scientists, technicians, bureaucrats, managers, engineers, doctors, lawyers, and other salaried professional workers embroiled Marxist writers in the "new working class" debates of the 1970s. These writers offered various explanations for the position of

* For an excellent discussion of Chomsky's views, see chapters 4 and 5 of Robert Barsky's (1998) biography *Noam Chomsky: A Life of Dissent*.

middle class professionals within the class structure of capitalist society, such as: professional, technical, and managerial workers are petty bourgeoisie who will be absorbed into the class of proletarians, as Marx predicted (Syzmanski 1979); they are part of a "new petty bourgeoisie" responsible for reproducing capitalist relations (Pouluntzas 1975); they occupy a "contradictory class position" between proletarians and capitalists (Wright 1978; 1979); and so on, representing more or less orthodox Marxist-Leninist interpretations.

Against the grain of orthodoxy, two participants in these debates, Barbara and John Ehrenreich, proposed in a stimulating essay that in the 20th century salaried professionals came to constitute a distinct third class between labor and capital, which they term the professional-managerial class, or PMC (Ehrenreich & Ehrenreich 1979; 2013). According to the Ehrenreichs (1979), the PMC may be defined as "consisting of salaried mental workers who do not own the means of production and whose major function in the social division of labor may be described broadly as the reproduction of capitalist culture and capitalist class relations" (p. 11). As a class of technocrats, the PMC emphasizes knowledge and expertise, obtained usually by university training, as the basis of authority. In the Ehrenreichs' view, the PMC's emergence depended on its expropriation of the productive skills of the working class, creating an "objective antagonism" between the two classes (pp. 16-7). Inspired by the Ehrenreichs' thesis, Michael Albert and Robin Hahnel argue that it is more useful to consider professionals as members of a coordinator class that monopolizes decision-making and empowering work roles (Albert 2003; 2006a; 2006b; Albert & Hahnel 1978; 1991a; 1991b).*

* Historically, in the view of Marxists, many anarchists, syndicalists, and other revolutionary socialists, capitalist societies have been marked by class war between proletarians and capitalists – the former, consisting of most of the population, who must sell their labor in order to survive and the latter, a much smaller class of people (perhaps one percent of the population) who own the means of production, control allocation, and hire and fire workers. Although there are many different nuances in Marxist class analysis,

Although the PMC and coordinator class theses provoked vitriolic responses (for instance, see the essays in Walker 1979)—which center, for the most part, on uninteresting definitional disputes about Marx's original meanings of class and class analysis—the thrust of these arguments continues to resonate with working class radicals as well as some anarchists and other anti-Leninist leftists. Whether one accepts that a third class really exists between labor and capital—an idea that Marxists reject—or simply believes that professional-managerial workers represent a strata of the working class, it is hard to shake the feeling that under capitalism, acute differences in influence,

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they are all undergirded by a basic understanding of capitalism as a system marked by intense class war between two poles, capitalists and workers – the former attempting constantly to accrue profits, and the latter to gain control of their lives. This two-class analysis has guided the global revolutionary left for over a century, giving inspiration to Communist takeovers in Russia, China, Eastern Europe, Cuba, and throughout much of Latin America. It is now widely known that these experiments in Marxism-Leninism were, at best, mixed bags. Although Communist regimes arguably reduced inequalities in many of the countries where they came to power, they also brought about the deaths of tens of millions, as well as other horrors.

After Communist regimes in Eastern Europe began collapsing in 1989, culminating in the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Western observers gushed that Communism's demise showed once and for all that socialism had failed and capitalism was a superior economic system. The problem with these pronouncements, as Michael Albert and Robin Hahnel (1991) observe, is that they were untrue; *actual* socialist values—egalitarian and participatory values, embodied in workers self-managing their own economic lives—had never characterized the fallen Communist states. Moreover, anti-Leninist leftists had been arguing for decades that Communist regimes based on the principles of Marxism-Leninism were fatally flawed, unrepresentative of socialism's core values, and could never hope to bring about stateless, classless societies. Indeed, many radicals from the movements of the 1960s had become disillusioned with Communism well before the fall of the Berlin Wall, owing in part to the New Left's own failures with Maoism and Marxism-Leninism. This stimulated a reexamination of Karl Marx's ideas in the 1970s, which generated new analyses that drew heavily from neglected historical inspirations, in particular the writings of Bakunin, Voline, G.P. Maximoff, Rudolf Rocker, Emma Goldman, and other anarchists, libertarian socialists such as Maurice Brinton, and anti-Leninist Marxists such as Karl Kautsky, Rosa Luxemburg, Paul Mattick, and Anton Pannekoek.

As libertarian socialists, Albert and Hahnel argue that Communist regimes inspired by Marxism-Leninism failed to create societies and movements based on actual socialist values, because although Communist states eliminated private ownership of the means of production, they also imposed hierarchies that undermined workers' self-management, for instance by breaking up autonomous workers groups and appointing technocrats to coordinate economic activities. A blind spot in orthodox Marxism is that it ignores the possibility that criteria other than ownership of the means of production can define or produce classes. Albert and Hahnel propose that coordinators can exist as a class whose class interests are opposed to those of both proletarians and capitalists. (Moreover, coordinatorism appears in Communist and capitalist economies alike.) Capitalists exploit coordinators, but coordinators exploit workers by monopolizing empowering decision-making on the job, as well as wielding considerable control over their own work lives and the work lives of those below them.

social status, culture, living standards, income, and class outlook divide professionals from members of the working class.

Building on the Ehrenreichs' insights, Jake Ryan and Charles Sackrey (1984) argue that universities serve capitalist class relations in several ways that perpetuate PMC-working class antagonisms. First, universities are the principal providers of credentials—college degrees—that separate members of the working class from those in the middle class. Second, universities perpetuate the technocratic outlook that treats knowledge and expertise as legitimate bases for political authority. Third, they support a meritocratic ideology that claims entitlement and privilege for high-level achievers, which ignores that privilege is largely a product of initial social class advantage. Fourth, universities and professors reproduce social hierarchy—and perpetuate the division between the PMC and the working class—by weeding out and ranking entrants into the academy, thus inhibiting or otherwise controlling upward mobility. Finally, according to Ryan and Sackrey, "the position of the academy and academics with the PMC has a unique dimension that further heightens the antagonism between this class and the working class" (p.111). They write:

> To distinguish themselves as a subgroup worth of membership, academics must flaunt their special credentials, their quality of knowledge, their eloquent taste, even their hip life style. Claim to membership cannot, in many cases, be based upon income…. In their flaunting, academics may well distinguish themselves from the "crass, monied, success elite" in order to demonstrate, ironically, that they belong to "another class." The point is that while doing so, they contribute to cultural forms and styles that oppress working people, and contribute further to the propensity of such people to self-loathing. This assumed tendency to emphasize knowledge, cultured taste, and sophistication as credentials for membership in the PMC also limits the potential for sustained political alliance between left-leaning academics and working class rank and file (pp.111-2).

In the final analysis, Ryan and Sackrey conclude "that the academic work process is essentially antagonistic to the working class, and academics for the most part live in a

different world of culture, different ways that make it, too, antagonistic to working class life" (p. 112-3).* Revolutionary movements not attuned to the class position of professional-managerial elements will stumble in their attempts to bring about classlessness. On the other side of this coin, radical academics and intellectuals unaware of or unwilling to acknowledge their class position will have difficulty building solidary relations with anti-capitalist radicals and working class folk.

POWER AND EXPERTISE

Intellectuals and academics possess expertise, i.e., highly developed skillsets and knowledges of their respective fields and problem areas. Historically, experts—academics, lawyers, doctors, economists, political strategists, and other members of the intelligentsia—have provided key technical support to ruling groups, not to mention crimes of state. This is no accident; as Brian Martin (2009) observes, "The fundamental problem is that organised systems of expertise—experts and their knowledge systems—are oriented to powerful groups rather than non-experts" (p. 13). This includes academics' expertise, which is shaped by training in graduate schools and academia, wherein scholars are expected to further the goals of their employers and other powerful actors. Indeed, as Jeff Schmidt (2000) convincingly argues, the primary function of graduate education is to inculcate a subordinate mindset among academics and other

* Leftists from PMC/coordinator class backgrounds also exhibit this bias. Michael Albert (2006b) writes: "I have polled Left audiences at many talks I have given. I find disdain for religion and for most sports—try asking leftists about NASCAR or bowling, much less about football, and watch the incredulous, dismissive reaction. I find leftists disparage most TV shows and country-and-western music, as well as most restaurants where working people eat and most newspapers that working people read, and even the actual eating and reading. The idea that so many leftists accidentally adopt daily preferences that are not only different from but routinely denigrate working people, with nary a nod toward comprehension, is not, I think, an accident. There are additional factors, case by case, but overall this derives from our having not yet fully comprehended that coordinator elitism is as vile as capitalist or racist or sexist elitism" (p. 408).

knowledge workers, as well as condition research interests to align with the needs of elites.

Anarchists have always approached expertise more cautiously than Marxists and especially Leninists, who underestimate bureaucracies' ability to keep expert power in check. Bakunin (1953, pp. 248-55), for instance, deferred to experts where appropriate, but critically and skeptically, without recognizing infallible authority figures.* Expertise creates another kind of friction between academics and radicals, in that it positions experts as wielding power over non-expert activists. From an anarchist perspective, those with more knowledge, skills, and access to power can endanger movements by promoting vanguardism and inequality. Martin (2009) explains:

> Some activists are highly suspicious of experts, even those aligned to social movements, often for good reason. Someone who stands out as highly knowledgeable or an eloquent speaker may be taken up by the media as a spokesperson, thereby gaining a disproportionate influence on the direction of a group or an entire movement, often at the expense of others' participation. A talented figure can be a source of envy. Others may leave key tasks to the expert and not try as hard as they would otherwise. A group can become dependent on a single person and vulnerable to that person's disaffection or departure (p. 16).

At the same time, Graeber, Martin, and other anarchist intellectuals recognize that some forms of expertise are useful or even necessary, and can have lasting, positive influences. For instance, radical legal scholars, lawyers, and analysts play indispensable

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* Quoting Bakunin (1953): "Does it follow that I reject all authority? No, far be it from me to entertain such a thought. In the matter of houses, canals, or railroads, I consult the authority of the architect or engineer. For each special type of knowledge I apply to the scientist of that respective branch. I listen to them freely, and with all the respect merited by their intelligence, their character, and their knowledge, though always reserving my indisputable right of criticism and control. I do not content myself with consulting a single specialist who is an authority in a given field; I consult several of them. I compare their opinions and I choose the one which seems to me the soundest.

"But I recognize no infallible authority, not even on questions of an altogether special character. Consequently, whatever respect I may have for the sincerity and honesty of such and such individuals, I have no absolute faith in any person. Such faith would be fatal to my reason, to my liberty, and to the successes of my undertakings: it would immediately transform me into a stupid slave, an instrument of the will and interests of others" (p. 253).

roles in contemporary struggles to end the death penalty, limit corporate influence, and protect the rights of vulnerable populations, such as immigrants, prisoners, and LGBTQ persons. Anarchists such as Graham Purchase (1990) distinguish between rational (helpful, justified) and irrational (corrupt, unjustified) forms of expertise.

> Although anarchists will not accept the irrational authority of a handful of politicians (whose only expertise is in the acquisition of prestige and power) anarchists do respect the *rational authority* of the expert. If one wishes to learn about, has a problem with, or is angry about some particular aspect of wine making, one approaches the workers of the wine making industries – and respects their expertise in matters of wine making (p. 7; emphasis in original).

Irrational authority/expertise may be viewed as a corruption of information power. Martin (2009) argues that the problem lies not in expertise *per se*, but in the fact that expertise is bound up with systems of power (p. 14). He urges radicals to reorient expertise to serve society rather than elites and experts, thus delinking it from systems of power (p. 18).

Anarchists also propose two arguments that demystify expertise. First, experts frequently direct their knowledge toward antihuman ends, such as crafting oppressive social policies, war planning, and the creation of weapons of mass destruction and cancer-causing chemicals (Bouchier 1996, p. 107). Simply put, there is a large body of expert knowledge the world could do without. Even when experts do not intend to cause harm, i.e., are not outwardly "bad people," they often act as unthinking technocrats who leave pernicious legacies. For example, it is worth remembering that several of the economic experts who were called upon to help fix the 2008 financial crisis were also chief architects of the banking and fiscal policies that helped cause the crisis in the first place. Second, anarchists argue that most socially desirable expertise is not so complex that people of average intelligence cannot develop these same skills. Higher education and especially graduate education, after all, are often more about credentialing workers and professionals than anything else (Aronowitz 2004; Martin 2004; Moten & Harney

2004; Newfield 2004; Schmidt 2000); the idea that only a certain subset of the population, so-called experts, are qualified to carry out certain jobs is an elitist myth. As Ehrlich et al. (1996) observe, although skills such as surgery and engineering would still require intense, lengthy training in a post-capitalist society, most of the work now done by experts "can be learned in a relatively short time so that it could be done by nearly everyone" (p. 8).

KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

Taken together, academics' intellectual stature, class position, and expertise foster a perception that they are uniquely qualified to produce and share ideas about society, that they have "earned" or deserve social prestige and a near-monopoly on intellectual cultural production. Not only is this perception false and elitist, but it misses that academics' privileged space in knowledge production is warped by factors such as the historically conservative functions of universities, state-corporate pressures, and research traditions unique to each field of study.

Scholarship and knowledge production are always politically, economically, and culturally situated, meaning they are never neutral or value-free (Berger & Luckmann 1966; Deetz 1992; Freire 1970/2000; Haraway 1988; Krippendorff 1985/1989; Schmidt 2000; Zinn 1970/1990). In their introduction to an important volume on anarchist research perspectives, co-editors Stephven Shukaitis and David Graeber (2007) observe that historically, universities have functioned primarily as "places for compiling and redacting received knowledge and teaching students to respect authority," not as "places that much fostered innovation or the questioning of received knowledge" (pp. 15-16). As they observe, "universities were never meant to be places for intellectual creativity. If it

happens, it's not because it's especially conducive to them, but only because if you pay enough people to sit around thinking, some new ideas are bound to get through" (p. 16). Universities continue to depict themselves as hotbeds of critical intellectual activity, but critics paint a different picture: Pervasive corporatism and the needs of the national security state have radically reshaped the purpose and structure of higher education, creating a military-industrial-academic complex in which critical attitudes are stifled, a heavy emphasis on skills training supersedes intellectual curiosity, and radical scholars experience alienation and academic repression (Aronowitz 2000; Giroux 2007; 2014; Nocella, Best, & McLaren 2010; Schiffrin 1997; Schmidt 2000). There is still plenty of innovation to be found, but this knowledge production occurs in the mainstream, serving mainly the state and capitalist institutions, not their challengers (Shukaitis & Graber 2007, p. 15).

Student activists of the 1960s sought to challenge this, first as members of the New Left, then later as academics, by waging a protracted, counter-hegemonic cultural struggle in academia by swelling its ranks with critical Marxist scholars. As a result of their "long march through the institutions," today thousands of academics at universities in the United States and throughout the world anchor their research in Marxism and its intellectual offshoots. Over the past two decades, anarchists have made their own inroads into academia, by securing jobs in universities, publishing academic books and journal articles on anarchist theory and practice, creating courses that deal with anarchism, and establishing professional networks of anarchist scholars (Amster et al. 2009; Shantz 2008). However, as Jeff Shantz (2008) argues, these scholars have not matched their growing enthusiasm with "critical reflection on the limitations of a turn to the academy by anarchists" (p. 37). Citing Beth Hartung (1983), he warns that, taken from the streets, anarchist knowledge risks becoming technology, contradicting anarchism's anti-

vanguardism (Shantz 2008, p. 39). Shantz also casts doubt on the New Left's strategy of a "long march through the institutions." Despite the growth of participatory and community-based research approaches, ultimately, he argues, this research "still takes place within and is conditioned by its existence within an authoritarian and unequal political economy of knowledge production" (p. 40). As Martin (1998) keenly observes, "The institutions change the activists long before the activists have a chance to change the institutions" (p. 1). Rather than using anarchist thought and practice to bolster academic work—allowing anarchism to become technology, per Hartung's (1983) phrase—Shantz (2008) argues that academic work should enrich anarchist analyses. He writes:

> The primary orientation of anarchist academics must remain the anarchist movements actively involved in struggles against capitalism and the state. In some senses anarchist academics are subsidized by the movement activists who are doing the day to day work of building movements while the academics are pursuing their own, often very personal, interests. Anarchist academics need to recognize that while they're doing the academic work … someone else is taking care of the organizing work (that they may be theorizing or analyzing) (pp. 41-2).

The anarchist critique of academic knowledge production poses a quandary. On the one hand, although universities embody authoritarian relations, they also represent an important site of struggle as well as potentially offer tremendous resources to radicals who can take advantage of them. There is no reason, in principle, why anarchists should not take up academic positions; certainly academic anarchists are better than the alternative, i.e., mainstream thinkers who uncritically serve power. Although few in number, anarchists can join other radical scholars and students waging important battles on campuses against attacks on academic freedom as well as the forces of neoliberalism, corporatism, and militarism. To quote Henry Giroux (2007),

> [T]he greatest challenge facing higher education centers on the collective task of developing a politics that extends beyond nation-state and reclaiming the academy as a democratic public sphere willing to confront the myriad global problems that produce needless human suffering, obscene forms of inequality, ongoing exploitation of marginalized groups, rapidly expanding masses of disposable human beings, increasing forms of social exclusion, and new forms of authoritarianism (p. 203).

On the other hand, as Shantz (2008) suggests, there are limits on what anti-capitalists in the academy can hope to accomplish. The institutional features which condition the political economy of knowledge production leave indelible imprints on scholars and scholarship. Do these necessarily limit liberatory potential and disconnect scholars and scholarship from activists and social movements? If not, how might anarchists and other anti-capitalist scholars begin to address and evaluate these limitations, per Shantz's admonition? For radical communications students and scholars, fortunately there exists several decades of critical scholarship addressing the politics of research. Drawing from this rich tradition, the remainder of this chapter examines the key features of different orientations toward communications research in an effort to illuminate an approach that confronts the ethical-political and epistemological issues raised by anarchists and other radical critics of academic scholarship.

ADMINISTRATIVE, CRITICAL, AND RADICAL/ACTIVIST RESEARCH

Among journalism and mass communications scholars, it is not uncommon to hear that the main split among researchers concerns methodology, with those who carry out quantitative research pitted against those who do qualitative research. Arguably, though, the main cleavage occurs between those who do administrative research and those who do critical research (Melody & Mansell 1983). As the terms suggest, administrative researchers perform work supportive of the status quo or within

recognized boundaries of critiques, whereas critical researchers try to challenge power inequities. Among the first to clearly distinguish between these orientations were members of the Frankfurt School (Horkheimer 1937/1989; Horkheimer & Adorno 1944/1990) and Paul Lazarsfeld (1941/1972), who tried unsuccessfully to integrate the two (Melody & Mansell 1983, p. 104). According to Jack Bratich (2007), "Administrative research seeks to make Western institutions run more smoothly while critical research challenges the very legitimacy of those institutions. Even today, communications studies finds itself embedded in this legacy" (pp. 141-142).

Administrative research includes work by academics, industry analysts, and other professional researchers, which services or otherwise contributes to the maintenance of universities, corporations, large foundations and non-profits, NGOs, and various other administrative or government agencies. Interlocking institutions of the state and corporate capitalism are the main sponsors and beneficiaries of this type of research, which typically favors quantitative methods in order to study or speculate about the effects of mass communication on audiences (Bratich 2007; Lazarsfeld 1941/1972; 1964; Melody & Mansell 1983; Schiller 1973; Smythe & Van Dinh 1983). The origins of administrative mass communications research lie in the 1920s and '30s, when U.S. corporations developed audience survey methods to collect information of use to advertisers, and it received a second major boost during World War II, when the information needs of the U.S. government spurred survey research into civilian morale, soldiers' attitudes, and the effects of propaganda (Lazarsfeld 1941/1979; 1964; Schiller 1973). According to Herbert Schiller (1973), "The war-induced research created ties between poll-takers, the government …, and the military bureaucracies, just as the pre-war market research had produced a close and continuing business-polling connection" (p. 107). Today, most

administrative research about journalism centers on political communications or helping the news industry, but it also includes market research and audience effects studies.

Meanwhile *critical research* into journalism and media questions the very foundations and power relations that infuse media institutions and shape communication processes, connecting these to broader cultural, social, and political-economic contexts (Bratich 2007; Horkheimer 1937/1989; Lazarsfeld 1941/1972; Melody & Mansell 1983; Smythe & Van Dinh 1983). Its transdisciplinary scope includes the humanities, social sciences, and art, and it ranges from literary criticism to "sharp critical analysis of communications phenomena in their systemic context" (Smythe & Van Dinh 1983, p. 123). Critical research typically favors qualitative methods, the use of which can be traced to the Chicago School of Sociology, because these allow for a deeper understanding of human behavior and society than quantitative methods permit (Denzin & Lincoln 1998). The origins of critical communications research lie in the 1930s, when Max Horkheimer became director of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, and members of the Frankfurt School launched new Marxist inquiries into ideology and society during Germany's troubled interwar years (Arato & Gebhardt 1982; Horkheimer 1937/1989; Horkheimer & Adorno 1944/1990; Jay 1973/1996; Smythe & Van Dinh 1983). Although the origins of critical research may commonly be attributed to these Neo-Marxist scholars, its evolving examination of the economic underpinnings of power is now applied to a widespread and well respected analysis of power relations. Unlike administrative research, critical research often lacks institutional support (Bratich 2007), and its main beneficiaries include critical researchers and scholarly social justice activists, who incorporate its insights into their own analyses and strategies (Shukaitis & Graeber 2007).

Dallas Smythe and Tran Van Dinh (1983) classified communications research as administrative or critical based on problems selected for study, research methodologies employed, and researchers' ideological perspective. Though these criteria are useful, they do not fully address anarchists and other radical activist researchers' concerns about intellectuals and experts, the self-reproducing nature of academic labor, or how academia's intellectual-institutional setting and creative legitimization requirements influence research. As noted above, anarchists are very critical of these influences on scholarship, and in recent years have produced literature that critiques academia while exploring what it means to be a radical intellectual (e.g., Chomsky 1987, pp. 19-21; Ehrlich 2001; Shantz 2008; Shukaitis & Graeber 2007; Stein 2001).

Building on the established definition, I propose that research be categorized as more or less administrative, critical, or possibly radical according to 1) problems selected for study, 2) research methodologies employed, and 3) the influence of ideology, *as well as* 4) the use of theory, 5) patronage that supports research, 6) the means of validating research, including how and who is selected to review it, and 7) the means of distributing research findings.

Problem Selection

Questions posed by administrative researchers and the projects they pursue generally address elite interests (Bratich 2007; Melody & Mansell 1983; Schiller 1973; Schmidt 2000; Smythe & Van Dinh 1983). For instance, several recent articles in *Newspaper Research Journal* explore how journalists and newspapers react to the problem of declining youth readership (Chen et al. 2011; Collins, Rabby, & Brown 2013; Graybeal 2011; Kaufhold 2010; Zerba 2013). This scholarship typifies administrative

research, because the questions these studies address are mainly of interest to capitalist news companies trying to accrue more readers and advertising profits. Because so much administrative research aims to fine-tune theories about the effects of mass media content, its research questions are often presented as testable hypotheses or narrow questions.

Meanwhile, the questions that critical researchers ask and the research projects they pursue ostensibly seek to challenge the status quo and power inequities (Bratich 2007; Melody & Mansell 1983; Smythe & Van Dinh 1983), as well as to "reshape or invent institutions to meet the collective needs of the relevant social community" (Smythe & Van Dinh 1983, p. 118). Similarly, radical activist researchers also deliberately pose questions that challenge power structures and resulting inequities. Their work tries to understand the root causes of inequality, violence, and oppression (Bratich 2007; Hale 2001; 2006; Martin 2010; Shukaitis & Graeber 2007). Critical and activist researchers both tend to pose more open-ended questions than administrative researchers do.

But there are also important differences between critical and radical researchers. To begin, critical researchers frequently seek to address questions that activists consider to be arcane or irrelevant. In addition, whether it is due to timidity or the requirements of validation within the academic system that supports them and decides what is a legitimate version of their ideas, critical researchers and others seeking tenure and promotion often avoid prescription or linking their research to activist political projects. They provide cultural critique rather than propose or articulate reformist insight or movement strategy (Cleaver 1979; Frey & Carragee 2007; Martin 2010; Shukaitis & Graeber 2007).*

* From an academic's perspective, this characterization of problem selection might be criticized as naïve, because it skirts the issue of radical activist researchers' own needs to secure promotion and tenure. It should be noted that the line between critical and radical research is by no means clear-cut; radical

Thousands of books and articles by critical scholars that criticize corporate media, describe the evolution of alternative media, or analyze the role of media in contemporary social movements, rarely venture beyond critique or description to suggest what lessons activists might draw from these experiences. As Lawrence Frey and Kevin Carragee (2007) observe:

> Unfortunately … communications scholars, like their counterparts in the other social sciences and humanities, and perhaps, in part, because of their desire to obtain disciplinary legitimacy in the eyes of those colleagues, all too frequently, over the course of time, shied away from addressing important social issues to focus, instead, on disciplinary theoretical concerns….
>
> This failure to confront salient social issues is unfortunate, for given the sheer volume and significance of these issues and the potential contributions that communication knowledge can make to managing them, the exigency for communications scholars to engage in direct vigorous action in support of needed social change has never been more apparent and important. In short, communications scholars need to engage in "communication activism" (p. 3).

Similarly, McChesney (1999; 2004; 2007a) forcefully argues that we find ourselves in a "critical juncture," which he describes as a window of opportunity in which activists, communications scholars, and students have an important role to play in fomenting a "communication revolution" capable of creating a media system that promotes democratic values over corporate profits.

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researchers produce critical scholarship and vice versa. Universities suppress radical scholars in myriad ways, though, because of their politics and commitments to social justice causes. Notable, recent examples include the cases of Norman Finkelstein and David Graeber, both radicals who were denied tenure for political reasons, as well as Ward Churchill, whose tenure was revoked. As the editors of a volume on academic repression observe, "hit jobs" like these are typically justified "in terms of alleged *professional inadequacies* rather than naked *political differences*" (Nocella, Best, & McLaren 2010, p. 31; emphasis in original). Successful radical academics develop various strategies for combining activism and career advancement (Cancian 1993), but there is no easy response to the aforementioned criticism. A second criticism is that radical scholars bite the hand that feeds them by assailing the university system. The obvious rejoinder is that radical scholars owe no allegiance to the hierarchical institutions that employ them, and in fact have a duty to severely criticize the institutions, cultures, and norms of academe.

Nor are critical scholars keen on providing concrete proposals for creating alternative media institutions, or suggesting media strategies that activists might pursue. Following Harry Cleaver's (1979) criticisms of philosophical and political economy readings of Karl Marx's *Capital*, which fail to inspire anti-capitalist struggles, we might say that most critical communications work is *ideological*, not *strategic*. Although it rails against capitalism, it does not serve capitalism's radical opponents. Not only is this ideological work of limited use to activists, dissidents, and social movements, but if it is accurate then it can actually work against them by helping elites plan their strategies.

The matter of problem selection ultimately boils down to researchers' goals. Research can serve different purposes, reflected in the distinction that scholars draw between "pure" (sometimes called theoretical) and "applied" research. Pure research is work driven by scholars' curiosity, whereas applied research involves searching for knowledge that has practical application. "The focus on research directed toward other scholars rather than toward helping communities to solve societal problems probably was related to the privileging of 'theory' over 'application' in the academy," according to Frey and Carragee (2007, p. 2). According to Charles Hale (2001), activist research challenges the dichotomy between pure and applied research, because activist research "is both theoretically driven and intended to be put to use." He writes that "the practice of activist research asks us to identify our deepest ethical-political convictions, and to let them drive the formulation of our research objectives" (p. 14).

According to Hale (2001; 2006), activist researchers build affinities with the communities they study and allow these communities to drive or influence the research process at every step, from problem formulation to interpretation of data and dissemination of findings. For Hale, allowing a community to play a hands-on role

throughout the process is an important feature of activist research. In Hale's (2001) words:

> Activist research requires a process of dialogue and collective work with the subjects of study prior to the finalization of the research design. Through collective work you identify a common set of problems, analytical puzzles, gaps in existing knowledge that the people in question are genuinely interested in addressing. … The activist scholar will have, or develop, particular affinities with [an aggrieved group] (or at times more than one), and give special priority to the dialogue with them. … Building on affinities this way does not require one to neglect alternative or contrasting perspectives; it does not assume that the group is completely unified or free from internal division; nor does it prevent stepping back to take in the big picture—indeed the research design must involve precisely that. It does provide some assurance that the research objectives, from the outset, coincide at least in part with what actors in the processes under study think it is important to know and to understand (p. 14)

This criterion aptly depicts Hale's own ethnographic research, which focuses on indigenous land rights in Central America. Hale's (2001; 2006) criteria for activist research undoubtedly reflect his and other radical anthropologists' ethical-political commitments to not betraying the communities they represent and frequently live in as participant observers. It is unclear that it can or should characterize all radical social science research, though. As Robert McChesney (2008b) observes, core research into the political economy of mass media "has a direct and important relationship with policies and structures that shape media and communication and influence the course of society," as well as "a direct relationship with policy makers and citizens outside the academy" (p. 51). Indeed, he argues, the writings of politically engaged scholars such as Ben Bagdikian, Herbert Schiller, Ed Herman, and Noam Chomsky laid the intellectual groundwork for the current media reform movement – to say nothing of McChesney's own influence in activist circles, which is significant. Much of this foundational work would not be considered activist research according to Hale's strict criterion, because even though it is informed by and draws inspiration from ongoing struggles, it is

produced more conventionally than the politically engaged, ethnographic anthropological research that Hale is concerned with. Given the clear activist bent of these political economists and their connections to oppositional movements in the United States, though, it would be strange, to say the least, not to treat their major works as examples of activist scholarship.

The truth in Hale's criterion is the notion that activists and movements' concerns should guide problem selection for activist researchers, rather than problems identified in academic literature produced by previous generations of critical scholars. (There may, of course, be overlap.) For these reasons, I propose a broader criterion for problem selection: Radical activist research consciously pursues questions that address activists and/or movements' strategic needs or gaps in knowledge. This conception still fulfills the underlying ethical-political goal of Hale's definition, but is broader and more suitable to media and journalism studies.

Methodology

The decision to investigate certain problems but not others predisposes researchers to prefer certain methodological approaches over others. This is also true when the interests of certain actors over others determine the research theories or methods used. Administrative researchers mainly employ quantitative methods such as public opinion surveys and content analyses of communication texts, although they also apply qualitative methods such as focus groups and structured interviews in search of context (Lazarsfeld 1941/1972; Smythe & Van Dinh 1983). For instance, telephone surveys are often used to study voter attitudes, because they are an expedient means of collecting data from a large number of respondents in a timely fashion (Poindexter &

McCombs 2000, p. 28). For most of the 20th century, the bulk of administrative mass communications research was concerned with the effects of media content on audiences, such as the effects of televised images of violence on children (Klapper 1960; Lowery & De Fleur 1983; Schramm, Lyle, & Parker 1961). According to Shearon Lowery and Melvin De Fleur (1983), the application of statistical techniques in the social and behavioral sciences opened the door for quantitative methods in mass communications research (pp. 20-21).

These methods were frequently developed to suit the needs of administrative organizations that could benefit from this research (Schiller 1973). Although states have collected statistical information about their territories and populations for hundreds of years, often with the intent to control or direct society (Scott 1998), modern survey research techniques have distinctly commercial origins. As Paul Lazarsfeld (1964) noted, "Commercial consumer studies had greatly contributed to the development of sampling methods and had given rise to public opinion polling. Radio had come on the scene [in the 1920s] and audience surveys were needed to parallel the circulation figures of magazines and newspapers. These data became the raw material for the new field of communications and opinion research" (quoted in Schiller 1973, pp. 106-107).

Purveyors of quantitative methods frequently lay claim to scientific rigor and/or accuracy, a perception reinforced by their emphasis on testing cause-and-effect hypotheses and mathematical interpretation of findings using statistical formulae, such as chi-squared tests for variance in sample populations (Lowery & De Fleur 1983; Poindexter & McCombs 2000; Severin & Tankard 2001).* For instance, noted quantitative scholars Paula Poindexter and Maxwell McCombs (2000) claim that

* In fact, these methods have fueled a longstanding schism between quantitative researchers in the academy and journalists in the field, reflected in the debate between the "green eyeshades and the chi-squares" (Cohen 2005; Highton 1967; 1989).

communications research relies on scientific research methods (p. 11-12); elsewhere, they write that qualitative research "is grounded in the humanities—not science" (p. 290). In their important history of quantitative mass communications research, Lowery and De Fleur (1983) write that communications research builds on the social and behavioral sciences, which in turn rest heavily upon the natural sciences (p. 19).

Critical communications scholars are more likely to use qualitative methods, on the other hand, such as ethnography and in-depth interviewing, which better lend themselves to "thick" description and promoting an in-depth understanding of human societies and behavior than quantitative methods permit (Geertz 1973; Lindlof & Taylor 2002; Potter 1996). The roots of this tradition lie in the Chicago School, a body of ethnographic fieldwork generated in the early 20th century by sociologists at the University of Chicago (Denzin & Lincoln 1998; Geertz 1973). Whereas administrative quantitative research is positivistic—meaning it valorizes empiricism and the scientific method— critical qualitative research tends to be more reflexive or idealistic, meaning it recognizes that human societies and behavior are unlike the physical world that natural scientists study. That is to say, administrative quantitative and critical qualitative researchers occupy fundamentally different positions on the epistemological continuum (Potter 1996).

A radical research orientation sits comfortably with Barbie Zelizer's (2004) assessment that there is no "correct" paradigm or perspective from which to study journalism and media. There are multiple interpretative communities, such as political science, history, cultural studies, and sociology, which may offer useful and valid approaches. An activist researcher's decision to prefer one interpretative paradigm over another is a strategic choice. Likewise, activist research methods do not lend themselves to formalization, and draw on the entire range of methodological tools available to social

scientists (Hale 2001, p. 14). As Jeff Ferrell (2009) writes, "Methodological closure and intellectual fastidiousness suggest stasis and stagnation; raggedy methods, methods not fully conceptualized or completed, suggest intellectual life and disciplinary vitality" (p. 74). Activist research also seeks to give voice to positions that are ignored due to a belief in scientific objectivity.

Nevertheless, for obvious reasons radical researchers typically gravitate toward the qualitative methods favored by critical scholars. Not only do these approaches better lend themselves to addressing the questions that radical researchers pursue, but they are more affordable and accessible to those outside the academy. For instance, a telephone survey can cost hundreds, if not thousands of dollars, which can be a serious obstacle for groups operating on shoestring budgets. The problem is not limited to survey research, either. Quantitative research also relies to a considerable extent on expensive computer software used to code, categorize, and quantify content for quantitative analyses, which can be too costly for researchers unaffiliated with colleges or universities. Most qualitative research, on the other hand, can be conducted cheaply, such as with audio recorders, pens, and paper. In addition to employing accessible methodologies, radical research also tries to incorporate sources of information that are accessible to other activists and citizens, such as books, newspapers, and magazines rather than academic journal articles.

Influence of Ideology

Smythe and Van Dinh (1983) define administrative ideology as the "linking of administrative-type problems and tools, with interpretation of results that supports, or does not seriously diminish, the status quo." They define critical ideology as "the linking

of 'critical' researchable problems and critical tools with interpretations that involve radical changes in the established order" (p. 118). To build on this useful distinction, it is helpful to ask how researchers perceive themselves. Do they view themselves first and foremost as disinterested scholars, as unbiased researchers contributing to institutional success, as mainly critics of power, or as radicals who self-consciously orient their teaching and research practices to serve movements? Within the field of mass communication, administrative researchers typically consider themselves as apolitical, objective social scientists. Critical researchers often consider themselves stalwart critics of power. Radicals consider both views deluded: administrative researchers fail to recognize that their work serves dominant power relations (or simply do not care that it does), while critical researchers fail to see that generating ideas which challenge status quo interpretations is not the same as generating knowledge that activists and movements can actually incorporate into their analyses or use to threaten or challenge dominant power relations.

In addition, critical scholars blind to their status as "embedded intellectuals" (Bratich 2007) often do not challenge important ways in which university settings replicate systems of oppression. Autonomists such as Harry Cleaver (2006), for example, note that even though one of the hallmarks of capitalist domination is its imposition of work on laborers, critical scholars ironically often impose just as much, if not more schoolwork on students than their administrative counterparts do.* The increasingly precarious nature of academic employment under neoliberalism also has a warping effect on critical scholars' ideological outlooks. For example, at McGill University in Quebec,

* I recognize, of course, that critical scholars often assign so much work and reading material out of a desire to help students unlearn decades of socialization to capitalist, heteropatriarchal, white supremacist, and other dominant values. I also recognize that Cleaver's view more accurately depicts schoolwork imposed on undergraduates, who generally speaking have less freedom to pursue their own interests than graduate students do.

faculty members of the school's Institute for Gender, Sexuality and Feminist Studies recently condemned striking students involved in anti-austerity protests for their strategies, politics, and commitments to feminism, describing pickets as forms of violence, intimidation, and bullying. Fully aware of the irony, striking students at McGill responded by writing,

> We ask that those faculty members who have indicated they will call security on us if we picket, reconsider their commitment to resistance against state violence, and critically self-reflect on the violence they would be inviting us to be subject to should they do this. … Solidarity is not a word you say at the end of a one-sided conversation during which you have threatened to fail us and call security on us (McGill WSSA Strike Mobilization Committee 2015).

Developing and Applying Theory

Journalism scholars often concern themselves with developing and testing theories about news media and communication. A theory simply posits a way of understanding a phenomenon; theories can be either good or bad, both value-laden terms (Shoemaker, Tankard & Lasorsa 2004). Fundamental differences between administrative, critical, and radical research orientations center on researchers' different theoretical assumptions, or in other words, on their decisions to include or exclude certain features of society, media, and communications processes as objects of study (Smythe & Van Dinh 1983).

Hierarchical forces invest themselves in the ideas of journalism and news media (Zelizer 2004, p. 5), meaning dominant conceptualizations of journalism and media are presented in politicized and frequently hierarchical terms. This is certainly the case for administrative researchers, who exclude from their analysis "issues relating to the structure of economic and political institutions ... , the centralization of power, the

characteristics of dominant-dependent relations and the incentives of vested interests" (Melody & Mansell 1983, p. 104). For instance, nearly the entire field of political communications research ignores the communicative activity of non-state actors such as activists and social movements. This favors a state-centric view of reality, which assumes that legitimate political activity occurs in formal political institutions and channels, such as the Habermasian "public sphere" or voting in elections. This perspective also ignores important class, race, and gender issues embedded in the population of these institutions.

Probably the dominant tradition within administrative journalism research is agenda-setting, which refers to the ability of news media to transfer salience of objects in communication texts to the public, so that the media agenda becomes the public's agenda (for an overview, see McCombs 2004). This theory has tremendous applications for elites concerned with managing public opinion. Indeed, the research institute Media Tenor, which organizes the world's main agenda-setting conference every year, uses this theory to serve governments, politicians, CEOs, banks and corporations, NGOs, elite universities, and other powerful, wealthy interests by providing "analytics and strategies to manage reputational risk and the value of brands," according to their website.*

Critical and radical researchers focus on power's troubling influence on media and communication processes, and as such include ideas about power and domination in their analyses. A chief difference persists between critical and radical research, though: Theory as it appears in critical research is often grand, jargonistic, and disconnected from the realities of struggle. In this respect, it shares much in common with administrative research couched in pseudo-scientific jargon. As Patricia Limerick (1993) observes,

> For all their differences, most right-wing scholars and most left-wing scholars share a common allegiance to a cult of obscurity. Left, right and center all hide

* See http://www.mediatenor.com/

> behind the idea that unintelligible prose indicates a sophisticated mind. The politically correct and the politically incorrect come together in the violence they commit against the English language (p. 3).

On the other hand, radical and especially anarchist researchers advocate that theory should be "small," easy to understand, and have implications for on-the-ground activism (Martin 2010).* As the editors of a recent volume on "militant" research observe, information flows between theory-building activists and critical researchers are for the most part unidirectional: Activists draw from the stream of academic literature to some extent, but academics virtually ignore new ideas from activists and social movements (Shukaitis & Graeber 2007, pp. 20-25).

Administrative, critical, and radical researchers also differ in their understandings of what makes a theory "good" or "bad." For mainstream administrative researchers, media theories are more or less good or bad depending on whether they can make accurate predictions about media behavior, communications systems, or audience effects (e.g., Poindexter & McCombs 2000). For critical researchers, what makes a theory good or bad hinges mainly on how well it captures or explains some aspect or aspects of social reality. For radicals, a theory's value lies in how well it serves activists and movements' needs to generate analyses and strategies that will propel social transformation (e.g., Albert 1974; Albert et al. 1986; Cleaver 1979).

Shukaitis (2004) suggests that radical theorizing about political, economic, and social change typically proceeds in one of three ways. In the first, traditional approach, the radical theorist selects a set of values, then tries to articulate new social institutions which incorporate or are based upon these values. This is the approach taken by Michael

* It should be noted that use of the term 'theory' to describe ideas in the social sciences, which includes mass communications research, is problematic. Social science theories come nowhere close to the intellectual rigor of actual scientific theory as it appears, for instance, in physics or chemistry. According to Kevin Clarke and David Primo (2013), social scientists suffer from "physics envy," in that they try too hard to emulate the hard sciences. This dissertation employs the word 'theory' because it is convenient to do so.

Albert and Robin Hahnel in their development of participatory economics, for example, which provides a detailed outline for a radical economic system based on equity, self-management, diversity, and solidarity (Albert 2003; 2006a; Albert & Hahnel 1991a; 1991b; Hahnel 2005). This approach certainly has its strengths—in particular, it can help radicals show to a wider audience what sort of world anti-capitalists envision—but abstract models can also provoke ideological disputes as well as gloss over pragmatic issues that arise in the process of trying to realize radical visions.

A second approach to theorizing about radical transformation is to focus on the methods used to achieve political, economic, and social change. This is the approach taken by anarcho-syndicalists, for instance, who stress revolutionary industrial unionism, general strikes, and other forms of direct action as crucial to social change. The main weakness of this overall approach to theory building is that it generates theories of transformation which apply only to specific, frequently narrow historical, political, economic, and social contexts. Ideas such as revolutionary syndicalism or council communism, for instance, might resonate among industrial workers, but remain largely unappealing to those who live in cities without factories, or to those who don't believe factories should exist in the first place (pp. 8-9).

A third approach, argues Shukaitis (2004), "would be to look at the existing forms of cooperative economics and social practice that have existed throughout human history and around the planet, and to try to draw out their underlying logic into a more generalized pluralistic vision" (p. 9). The main strength of this approach is that, since the researcher starts from actually existing cooperative structures and practices, she or he does not need to argue that they are possible; obviously they are. This approach is also notable because it locates anarchist ideas and practices in contemporary examples, rather than in texts authored by long dead, white, European men (p. 10-11). In addition to

Shukaitis, this ethnographic impulse underlies theorization by anarchists and fellow travelers such as Peter Gelderloos (2010a), David Graeber (2004; 2007; 2009), Uri Gordon (2008), James C. Scott (1985; 1990; 1998; 2009; 2012), and others (e.g., the activist writers collected in Shukaitis & Graber 2007). These ethnographically-inclined researchers share much in common with radicals who adopt a more "grounded theory" approach, which involves immersing oneself in qualitative data in order to identify trends or construct categories with the aim of deriving theory inductively from the ground up, rather than collecting data to test preexisting theoretical frameworks (Charmaz 2014; Corbin & Strauss 2008; Glaser & Strauss 1967; Martin 2010). Examples include works by Gene Sharp (1973a; 1973b; 1973c), Jules Boykoff (2007), and Bill Moyer (2001).

Patronage

Who supports research, and who become its main beneficiaries? Administrative researchers enjoy state and corporate patronage. As mentioned above, funding and research directives for early communications research came from the federal government and corporate America. During the Cold War, the Defense Department, CIA, and various other U.S. intelligence agencies also transfused money into administrative communications research (Simpson 1993; 1996). Administrative researchers often dismiss criticisms of this patronage, by arguing that the research itself is neutral or value-free, or that they are working towards a kind of unified theory* of media production and effects, so it should not matter where funding comes from (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, pp. 20-4). But clearly, administrative researchers are more likely to ask those questions

* The term 'unified (field) theory' comes from physics, and originally referred to the hope of reconciling Einstein's general theory of relativity with quantum theory.

that catch the eyes of grant-givers and other powerful institutional actors, while some questions will not be asked at all (Schmidt 2000).

Critical researchers do not receive institutional support on the scale that administrative researchers do. They receive minimal funding compared to administrative researchers, which often comes from foundations and NGOs, rather than government agencies or corporations.* Radicals nevertheless question this patronage, pointing to the troubling influence that the "non-profit industrial complex" has on directing movement activity and thwarting social change (INCITE 2007). They urge that movements, victims of social injustice, and oppressed peoples be the main beneficiaries of scholarship (Hale 2001; 2006; Martin 2010).

In addition to funding, patronage entails the question of what role researchers play vis-à-vis activists and movements. As noted above, anarchist scholars such as David Graeber (2004) and Jeff Shantz (2008) admonish radical academics to reject intellectual vanguardism. More recently, anarchists have proposed arguments that academics should move beyond ally status to become accomplices. This puts conflict with the state and capitalism as front-and-center. As Indigenous Action puts it (2014):

> [Academics and intellectuals'] role in struggle can be extremely patronizing. In many cases the academic maintains institutional power above the knowledge and skill base of the community/ies in struggle. Intellectuals are most often fixated on un-learning oppression. These lot generally don't have their feet on the ground, but are quick to be critical of those who do.
>
> Should we desire to merely "unlearn" oppression, or to smash it to fucking pieces, and have it's [sic] very existence gone?

* This discussion focuses on patronage that directly and actively subsidizes scholars' research projects. It goes without saying that administrative, critical, and radical scholars alike enjoy a different sort of patronage from the universities who employ them, in the form of tenure, promotion, salaries, and institutional backing.

> An accomplice as academic would seek ways to leverage resources and material support and/or betray their institution to further liberation struggles. An intellectual accomplice would strategize with, not for and not be afraid to pick up a hammer.

Validating Research

Administrative and critical researchers both operate within the confines of the academy and mainstream academic scholarship. For them, validating research findings comes in the form of refereed journal articles and conference papers, as well as annual peer reviews by colleagues in their university departments. Reviews for tenure and promotion are done within a community of scholars with expertise in the reviewee's field. The validation system privileges scholars who research familiar ideas within established paradigms. Applying Thomas Kuhn's (1964) ideas to journalism research, Barbie Zelizer (2013) observes, "Ideas can be easily and successfully disseminated when they discretely pass the familiar and expected threshold rather than overtly challenge, minimize or make irrelevant long-standing parts of the canon" (p. 468).

Peer review has its merits and possible pitfalls, but radical academic research carries with it an additional, expressly ethical-political standard of validation. According to Hale (2006), "At the end of the day, activist scholars must embrace two quite distinct sets of objectives and forms of accountability, and they must negotiate the often considerable tensions between them" (p. 105). The first set of accountability measures refers to the aforementioned university system of validation. Above and beyond this, according to Hale (2001), activist research is considered valid if the research "helped produce knowledge that helps to resolve a problem, to guide some transformation, which formed part of the research objectives from the start" (p. 15). In other words, the additional standard of validation for activist research is that the research benefits

activists, oppositional movements, and/or oppressed people. The important link between political economy research and on-the-ground activism (McChesney 2008b), mentioned above, is a prime example of this. By informing and furthering oppositional movements, this scholarship attempts to meet the additional standard of validation.

However, peer review does not assure that peers or colleagues will value activist research. Academic journals respected by the component of the university to which the activist scholar is attached may not accept activist material and within professional journalism associations, only one, the Union for Democratic Communications, values activist scholarship. This structure imposes the negotiation stress noted by Hale (2001; 2006). Indeed, arguably, the academic publishing system works to suppress radical scholars, by favoring students and faculty who proffer "legitimate" perspectives or are otherwise willing to play the academic game. As Derric Shannon and William Armaline (2010) observe, "The notion of 'legitimacy' in academe is not only problematic in the sense that it is socially constructed by those who hold power in higher education and alienates those who do not. It is also problematic in the silencing of political and institutional dissent" (p. 424). Although the system of refereed journal article publishing is portrayed as objective or meritocratic, it is a stretch to say that most reviewers and editors are "peers" of graduate students or radical academics, and often it is the case that editors will solicit colleagues for submissions or create special issues based on conference proceedings or certain theoretical and/or methodological approaches (ibid.). When journal editors and reviewers perform powerful gatekeeper roles, the odds are stacked against radical graduate students and faculty seeking publication.

Presentation and Distribution of Research Findings

The conventions of academe pose a notable challenge to the circulation of scholarly research among interested, non-academic audiences. This is equally true for administrative and critical scholars. To begin, a good deal of academic research is purposefully indirect and obtuse. As Limerick (1993) observes,

> While we waste our time fighting over ideological conformity in the scholarly world, horrible writing remains a far more important problem. For all their differences, most right-wing scholars and most left-wing scholars share a common allegiance to a cult of obscurity. Left, right and center all hide behind the idea that unintelligible prose indicates a sophisticated mind. The politically correct and the politically incorrect come together in the violence they commit against the English language. … The habits of academic writers lend powerful support to the impression that research is a waste of the writers' time and of the public's money (p. 3).

Administrative and critical researchers are expected to present the findings of their research through conventional academic channels: as conference papers, journal articles, and academic books. The more prestigious the peer-reviewed journal, the better, because scholars' careers depend on their ability to annually update curriculum vitaes with lists of notable publications. Administrative journalism researchers emphasize publishing in "first-tier" journals such as *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator* and *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, the flagship journal of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.* Critical researchers meanwhile have their own "first-tier" journals, such as *Critical Studies in Media Communication* and *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, which serve as house organs for the National Communication Association.† These "first-tier" publications prominently gate-keep for professional organizations linked to communications industries. As Jack Bratich (2007) observes,

* See http://www.aejmc.org/home/publications/
† See https://www.natcom.org/journals.aspx

> [W]hile professional associations have historically functioned as gatekeepers within their respective fields, now they gate-keep between the field and state/corporate institutions. Publishing in association-affiliated journals enhances professional status, especially in contrast to the proliferation of non-association journals (where more experimental and critical work can take place). The invocation of standards in the field has the potential to further marginalize innovative and critical work. It is not that cutting-edge work can't appear in the association-sponsored journals; it often does. But more and more the assumption is that the only innovative work that matters appears in the official organs. This fetishizes the field's own filters, which is by definition a conservative maneuver (p. 140).

Radicals argue that the selective system of distribution alienates scholars from activists, movements, and oppressed people (e.g., Gelderloos 2010b; McChesney 2007a). Although digital technologies and the internet can facilitate the spread of scholarly research, most "reputable" academic journals bury this content behind paywalls, as well as require authors to transfer their copyrights to journal publishers. Both work to restrict non-academic audiences from accessing large bodies of scholarly knowledge. Although there is a strong argument to be made that knowledge produced within universities can and should be considered a public good, the scholarly publishing industry has worked instead to enclose the knowledge commons—a process which has accelerated over the past 60 years as academic journal publishing has become more and more lucrative (Oliphant 2007). As Tami Oliphant (2007) explains, "Scholarly publishers exploit the publishing model by creating inelastic markets and partial monopolies, by lobbying for stricter laws regarding intellectual property, and by supporting the commodification of knowledge and information to maximize profits" (p. 77). The commodification of knowledge is part of the larger neoliberal vision of the digital university, which seeks to proletarianize skilled knowledge workers. An open access movement is now underway to undermine publishers' attempts at monopolizing academic knowledge, galvanized by the

martyrdom of computer programmer and hacktivist Aaron Swartz, who, facing multiple indictments and a lengthy prison sentence for illegally downloading thousands of articles from the academic digital library JSTOR, committed suicide on January 11, 2013.*

As primarily tax-payer supported academics, radical scholars believe that they and other scholars should present their research findings in ways that are accessible to a much wider community of interested, politically involved readers. (It must be noted, however, that there are no restrictions or policies against doing so.) This can occur in many ways: on various websites, as workshops in community spaces, and even through journals that are distributed through radical bookstores and infoshops. These activities, however, are often not viewed as proof of scholarly value by the academy and are often left off vitaes. Similarly, academic journals premised on open access are, for the most part, not considered to be as reputable as the "first tier" journals which are not.

Timeliness is a factor as well. In addition to the act of writing a scholarly article, a process which can take months or years, the decision to sit on findings until they have appeared in a peer-reviewed academic journal often delays information flows by several months. As Harry Cleaver (2000) observes, "the academic need for publication and for individual identification with new ideas and research" is a serious obstacle for academics who wish to circulate their research among activists and solidarity networks.†

* For instance, several academics now make all of their published papers available for free on their university personal pages as well as on the website http://www.academia.edu/.

† Cleaver himself has made all of his writings and lecture notes available online for free, and since retiring has been using his free time to digitize writings associated with the Zerowork collective. See: https://la.utexas.edu/users/hcleaver/hmchtmlpapers.html. See also http://utexas.academia.edu/HarryCleaver

SITUATING THE PRESENT WORK

The preceding discussion elucidates what I consider to be important features of administrative, critical, and radical research orientations. The radical research position is, of course, highly idealized and it is fair to say that I have overdrawn some of the distinctions between radical and critical academics. In the final analysis, it appears unlikely that scholars who identify as radical or activist researchers can ever completely escape the dilemmas posed above, i.e., they could ever be completely "pure" in their commitments to a radical research orientation. As such, in actual practice a radical research orientation will share much in common with the critical orientation. This, of course, is not an easy balance to strike. Even tenured radicals face immense pressure not to push the envelope too far. Given pervasive gender bias, validation can often be even more difficult for women and minorities. For academia-bound radical graduate students, the pressures are far greater – to finish a dissertation or thesis, build a curriculum vitae, and secure a job that will put one in a position to pay off crippling student debt.

Chapter 4: Three Roles of News Media: Battleground, Adversaries, and Tools/Resources

Throughout the history of the United States, marginalized groups have sought recourse by forming or joining movements working toward various goals, such as abolishing the institution of slavery, establishing workers' protections as well as ending child labor, upholding and expanding freedom of expression, extending the franchise to women and people of color, protecting the ecology and nonhuman animals, and compelling U.S. military forces to abandon war plans, among other things (Zinn 1980/2003). These actions, seen by entrenched power as threatening, were considered illegitimate and responded to in various ways over time by those who sought to define and often to dismiss them.

In their goals, actions, and cultural influence, progressive, radical leftwing, and insurgent social movements represent a kaleidoscope of challenges to elites, authorities, corporations, governments, and other powerholders, e.g., "all those who occupy influential positions in society and who support and reproduce existing social relations" (Woehrle, Coy, & Maney 2008, p. 28). According to the eminent social movement scholar Doug McAdam (1982),

> *[A]ll* social movements pose a threat to existing institutional arrangements in society. The basis of this threat is only partially a function of the goals of the movement. … What marks social movements as inherently threatening is their implicit challenge to the established structure of polity membership and their willingness to bypass institutionalized political channels. Emerging, as they do, among excluded groups, social movements embody an implicit demand for more influence in political decision-making. This raises the spectre of a restructuring of polity membership, a prospect that is anathema to all components of the elite (p. 26; emphasis in original).

As non-state actors, activists and movements contend with opponents who stigmatize and (often literally) outgun them—culturally, economically, politically, and militarily. From the perspective of elites, this stigmatization is a perfectly reasonable, perhaps even necessary, response to the growth and power of insurgent groups and movements. Despite this, for over two centuries, contentious collective action such as protests, demonstrations, social movements, and revolutions has been an important means by which ordinary people affect change outside of official channels such as the courts and ballot box (McAdam 1982; McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly 2001; Tarrow 2011; Tilly 1978; Zinn 1980/2003; Zinn & Arnove 2014). Indeed, for many, social movement participation is a main point of entry into political life. As Sidney Tarrow (2011) observes,

> Contentious collective action serves as the basis of social movements, not because movements are always violent or extreme, but because it is the main and often the *only recourse* that most ordinary people possess to demonstrate their claims against better-equipped opponents or powerful states (pp. 7-8; emphasis mine).

Early scholars of collective behavior, many of whom were motivated to explain the revolutionary upheavals that rocked countries such as France and Germany in the 19th century, saw things differently. In his important study of crowd psychology, the French social psychologist Gustave LeBon (1895/1960) argued that violent emotions, inability to reason, and herd mentality characterized crowd behavior. In LeBon's disparaging outlook, these characteristics were common to "women, savages, and children." Drawing on LeBon's work, American sociologists Robert Park (1904/1972) and Herbert Blumer (1939) also believed that collective behavior transformed individuals, diminishing their self-control and ability to think critically (McPhail 1989). Although these scholars focused mainly on crowd behavior rather than social movements per se, their approaches colored studies of contentious collective action for decades. According to these early writers' model of social insurgency, underlying structural strains on society produce

disruptive psychological effects in people, such as feelings of isolation, anomie, and cognitive dissonance. When these disruptive effects come to a head, movements emerge as a way to help societies manage psychological tensions. In this view, social movements are mainly *psychological* rather than *political* phenomena; "healthy" societies do not feature social movements, because they manage psychological tensions.

It was not until after the 1960's that social movement scholars began to appreciate rationality, agency, and organization as critical to understanding movement dynamics, pointing for instance to activists' abilities to mobilize resources (Jenkins & Perrow 1977; McCarthy & Zald 1973; 1977; McPhail 1991; Oberschall 1973) and capitalize on expanding political opportunities (Kitschelt 1986; McAdam 1982; Tarrow 1994). Scholars have also attempted to explain collective action in such terms as individuals' attitudes, grievances, and rational choices; people join movements at least in part because doing so resonates with their personal beliefs (Elster 1979; Ferree 1992; Friedman & McAdam 1992; Gamson 1992). Activism also produces important psychic benefits; being part of a social justice movement can raise activists' self-esteem, give them feelings of belonging and solidarity, or instill a sense of empowerment (Owens & Aronson 2000; Taylor & Whittier 1992). Tarrow's observation above thus captures an important feature of contentious collective action: that people take up activism and join social movements because, on some level, it *makes sense* for them to do so. As Michael Schwartz (1976) puts it, "people who join protest organizations are at least as rational as those who study them" (p. 135).

Unlike social movement studies in sociology, much of contemporary political science devalues this perspective, focusing on "rational," institutionalized politics rather than on the "irrational," insurgent politics of social movements (McAdam 1982, pp. 2-3). For similar reasons, state-centric research perspectives pervade the field of political

communications, which virtually ignores the discursive activities of activists, social movements, and other non-state actors. This dissertation departs from the self-serving elite perspective which devalues rationality and agency as key components of contentious collective action. It assumes instead that complex ideas about power in society, as well as an awareness or sense of relevant strategic concerns, inform and animate activists and their socially transformative work. Movements are fundamentally about power (influence over resources and people) and politics (how people decide to organize and govern themselves). Movement power and politics cannot be understood separately from overarching socially transformative goals, strategies to pursue those goals, the tactics employed to further those strategies, and the obstacles that activists and movements encounter.

Establishment and oppositional media rarely feature prominently in historical accounts of social movements, but they have played huge roles in every major social struggle in the United States from the Revolutionary War to the present, either as catalysts for action or obstacles to change (Armstrong 1981; Downing 2001; Gitlin 1980; Kessler 1984; McChesney & Scott 2004; Ostertag 2006; Streitmatter 2001). Critical communications scholars and activists have generated four main currents of literature that reflect and acknowledge media's significance vis-à-vis social movements and activism.

- The first current focuses on the power of corporate mass media and addresses such issues as: how this power developed, corporate media's relationships with other centers of power, its implications for democracy, the effects of news content on audiences, and how mainstream news media depict or frame political-economic and social issues, including the activities of activists, movements, and other non-state actors.

- The second current focuses on alternative and activist media: what roles they play in building and sustaining movements, the political-economic and cultural forces which influence their organizational forms and content, the influence of these media on popular consciousness as well as on mainstream media, and definitional disputes over what constitutes alternative media.
- A third current focuses on popular culture, the public sphere, and subaltern counterpublics as areas of human life where activists and movements articulate dissident ideas as well as contend with their opponents.
- The fourth current focuses on the ways in which activists can use mass media to reach large audiences and build movements.

These currents frequently dovetail or combine with one another in literature on news media and contentious collective action. Taken together, they are theoretical wellsprings for this chapter and Chapter 5. In this chapter, I will reorganize key themes or ideas from these currents to sketch out three roles of news media that appear in critical scholarship as well as activist discourse on media-movement interactions.

THREE ROLES FOR MEDIA: BATTLEGROUND, ADVERSARIES, AND RESOURCES

According to an idealized view of the press, in democratic capitalist societies, mass news media serve as watchdogs and stewards of democracy: News media inform voters about policy options, function as a discursive space for diverse views and political discourse, limit government and corporate power, ensure government transparency, and hold elected officials accountable to their constituents. Journalism scholars debate how well the press measures up to these tasks, but the core belief—that journalism and

representative democracy go hand-in-hand—continues to guide academic inquiry (e.g., Cook 1998; Gans 2003; Iyengar & Reeves 1997; Jones 2009; McChesney 1999; 2004; McChesney & Nichols 2010; McNair 2000; Overholser & Jamieson 2005). This core belief also inspires U.S. journalists as well as journalism educators and students. To quote the late White House correspondent Helen Thomas (2006),

> What makes the press so indispensable in a democracy is that it is the only institution in our society that can question the president, or other public officials, regularly. Challenging a public leader is not required in the Constitution, but if a leader is unchallenged, he can rule by executive order, edict, or act on his own whim in secrecy. Fortunately, we do not have a king or a dictator with unlimited, unquestioned power. There is a governmental system of checks and balances in place among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches, but beyond those, a free society depends on the press to keep the government honest (p. xxi).

According to Barbie Zelizer (2013), the idea of democracy occupies a more central role in journalism research than it deserves. This occurs "because much of the scholarly world in the West—and specifically in the USA—depends directly or indirectly on the presumption of democracy and its accoutrements" (p. 467). Citing historical, cultural, geographic, and political-economic evidence to show that the notion of democracy is not central, or even necessary, for understanding journalism, Zelizer urges scholars to retire the linkage between journalism and democracy in order to promote new understandings in the field.

In this vein, this chapter shifts attention away from the journalism/democracy nexus to pursue different conceptions of news media. Specifically, a distillation of the aforementioned four currents of critical scholarship and radical activist literature identifies three important roles of news media vis-à-vis activism and social movements:

- News media constitute a *site of struggle* on which activists and their opponents contend with one another;

- Mass news media act as *adversaries* that suppress and obstruct activists and movements;
- and news media serve as *tools and resources* that activists may harness or exploit in their struggles against elites.

I should emphasize that my focus is on how scholars and activists conceptualize news media as it relates specifically to contentious collective action. I recognize that non-activist perspectives might identify other important roles for news media, such as providers of non-political information (regarding the weather, sports, etc.) or as sources of entertainment. In addition, although I aim to present and asses these roles in a way consonant with anarchist thought and practice, in no sense are these three conceptions uniquely anarchist; these roles slot easily into several analytical perspectives, including rightwing accounts of news media.

Critique of the Public Sphere

For mass social movements to succeed, activists and organizers must garner the support of large sections of the non-activist population. As Angel (2008) explains, "if social change is going to happen in the United States it needs to happen on a mass scale. Activists need to break out of insular communities and reach out to the general public" (p. 9). However, they cannot hope to accomplish this solely through direct interactions with people, such as face-to-face encounters, protests, demonstrations, or door-to-door organizing.[*] Recognizing this important limitation, dissidents and activists throughout

[*] My emphasis is, of course, on activists and news media. For an overview of how activists use different mediums, see John McHale's (2004) *Communicating for Change: Strategies of Social and Political Advocates*.

U.S. history have turned to media in order to circulate texts, images, and other messages with the goals of building public support, solidarity, and organizational strength.

Arguably, the very origins of American radicalism are linked inextricably with print media (Armstrong 1981, pp. 10-15; Loughran 2007). According to historian Harvey Kaye (2005), 150,000 copies of Thomas Paine's pamphlet *Common Sense*, which inspired revolutionary Americans to seek independence from Great Britain in 1776, were distributed in America alone, making it proportionately the best-selling publication in the United States to date. Moreover, as Kaye notes, "copies were shared, and those who could not read it heard it read aloud in homes, taverns, workshops, and fields," meaning Paine's ideas reached many more people than circulation figures indicate (p. 43; see also Loughran 2007).* A little over five decades later, from 1830 to 1865, William Lloyd Garrison's newspaper *The Liberator* similarly animated American political life, by uncompromisingly arguing for the immediate emancipation of all slaves. Along with Garrison, Frederick Douglass and other antislavery editors catapulted radical abolitionism from a fringe position in U.S. society onto the national political stage as a moral imperative (Mayer 1998; Ostertag 2006, pp. 23-53; Streitmatter 2001, pp. 20-35).

A century later, after the corporate mainstream press came to prominence in the Reconstruction era, both the underground press and mass news media played pivotal roles in building and undermining the radical New Left movements of the 1960s and 1970s (Armstrong 1981; Gitlin 1980; McMillian 2011; Peck 1991). Today, activists depend on many different kinds of media technologies and tactics to facilitate their socially transformative work. Mass corporate news media are now so central to society

* Circulation figures for Common Sense are frequently exaggerated, with some writers quoting estimates as high as 600,000 copies distributed in the colonies (e.g., Gatto 1992, p. 13). These figures are unreliable. For discussion, see Trish Loughran's (2007) *The Republic in Print: Print Culture in the Age of U. S. Nation Building, 1770-1870*.

that most ordinary people learn what they know about activists and social movements through their encounters with the media. As Mayer Zald (1996) observes, "Movement activists may debate in coffeehouses, in bars, or in meeting halls, but they have to change and mobilize bystander publics, many of whom may only know of the movement and its issues as portrayed in various media" (p. 270). Moreover, not only is it true that most communication from and about activists and movements is mediated for the vast majority of ordinary Americans by whichever medium they turn to, but most communication between activists and within movements is mediated as well by their choices.

Given the central importance of the "mediascape" to U.S. dissidents, activists, and movements (Boykoff 2006b; 2007; Downing 2001; Gitlin 1980; Rodríguez 2001; Ryan 1991; Zald 1996), how should communications scholars and activists conceptualize this arena or terrain and its many dimensions vis-à-vis the strategic concerns of activists and movements?

Perhaps the most popular perspective guiding inquiry into these matters is that news media represent a public sphere (e.g., Brundidge 2010; Downing 2001; Garnham 1993; Howley 2005; Ruiz et al. 2011; Socolow 2010). The term *public sphere* is a translation of Jürgen Habermas's (1962/1991) complex concept *Öffentlichkeit*, which refers variously to the public, the public sphere, and publicity (p. xv). In his book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas argues that the bourgeois or liberal public sphere is the foundation of civic society, a discursive space where citizens come together to debate issues of general interest and policies that widely affect society, and where possible, to arrive at common judgments or solutions. According to Habermas, the public sphere depends on the quality of debate and the quantity of perspectives presented within debates. Through sustained rational-critical discourse between individuals who hold multiple competing perspectives, the best ideas rise to the top and

effectively "win" or settle debates in the public sphere. Habermas considers these debates to be the basis of popular political activity. As Kevin Howley (2005) explains,

> Isolated or 'bracketed' from both state and market forces, this public sphere is the space in which a public comes to understand and define itself, articulate its needs and common concerns, and act in the collective self-interest. In short, it is a space in which a social aggregate becomes a public (p. 19).

The idea of the public sphere is linked to a liberal conception of deliberative democracy. It holds public discursive activity in high esteem because it presumes that rational-critical debate on political and social issues will lead eventually to the best possible outcomes in society and polity structures, i.e., that rational-critical discourse is what allows democracy, an admittedly nebulous idea, to flourish and function. For obvious reasons, this vision appeals to many communications scholars and left-progressive activists in the United States; Habermas's work has been "indispensable" to those committed to theorizing about democratic practice and the limits of democracy in late capitalist societies (Calhoun 1992; Emden & Midgley 2013; Fraser 1990, p. 56-57; 2014). Arguably, though, liberal democracy is too narrow a vision. As Benjamin Barber (1984/2003) observes,

> Liberal democracy has in fact become such a powerful model that sometimes, in the Western world at least, the very future of democracy seems to depend entirely on its fortunes and thus on the American system of government and its supporting liberal culture. This perceived monopoly not only limits the alternatives apparent to those seeking other legitimate forms of politics but leaves Americans themselves with no standard against which to measure their own liberal politics and with no ideal by which to modify them, should they wish to do so (p. 3).

There are compelling reasons to push critical and radical conceptions of media-movement interactions beyond the public sphere/democracy nexus. To begin, in actual practice the public sphere falls far short of the idealized version presented by Habermas. Feminists, antiauthoritarians, and other critics contend that historically, the liberal public

sphere has excluded the voices of women, non-property owning men, proletarians, people of color, and dissident citizens (Boykoff 2007, pp. 16-21; Eley 1992; Fraser 1990; Landes 1988; Negt & Kluge 1993). In a seminal essay critiquing Habermas's ideas, critical theorist Nancy Fraser (1990) notes that "discursive interaction within the bourgeois public sphere was governed by protocols of style and decorum that were themselves correlates and markers of status inequality. These functioned informally to marginalize women and members of the plebeian classes and to prevent them from participating as peers" (p. 63). These protocols of style are "informal impediments to participatory parity that can persist even after everyone is formally and legally licensed to participate" (ibid.) – for instance, men's tendencies to interrupt women, talk over them, ignore what they have to say, or "mansplain" things to them (Solnit 2014; Tannen 1990; 1994).* According to Fraser (1990), these and related experiences suggest that "deliberation can serve as a mask for domination" (p. 64).

Fraser contends that in stratified societies, "deliberative processes in public spheres will tend to operate to the advantage of dominant groups and to the disadvantage of subordinates" (p. 66). The thrust of Fraser's critique of the public sphere also applies to contemporary mass news media; her position is shared by critical scholars across the board. Later in this chapter and in Chapter 5, I will review studies of news content as well as critical theoretical accounts which support the claim that elite perspectives dominate press coverage of important political, economic, and social issues.

Recognizing the liberal public sphere's foundations of exclusivity, various writers have attempted to show how subaltern groups construct alternatives to it, such as black, proletarian, and women's public spheres (Black Public Sphere Collective 1995;

* Rebecca Solnit's (2014) term "mansplaining" refers to men's tendencies to explain things to women in patronizing or condescending tones.

Landes 1988; Negt & Kluge 1993; Ryan 1990).* According to Jules Boykoff (2007), "These zones of opposition provide safe arenas from which alternative ideas and principles can be catapulted into the mainstream public sphere, thereby widening democracy" (p. 19). But Boykoff also recognizes that some activists and dissidents have little to no interest in joining the liberal public sphere or widening democracy. Commenting on this idea, he writes:

> [M]any of these subaltern counterpublics are not simply working outside the pathways of institutional power in order to muster the confidence to ask for a seat at the state-sanctioned table. Nor do many of them have the desire to make the table bigger. Rather, many of the dissidents [featured in Boykoff's study] want to throw out the table altogether because they believe true democracy is impossible if the existing institutions aren't destroyed and replaced by new social relations. Many members of these progressive, oppositional groups believe that nothing truly transformative ever makes it to the institutional table if it's not backed up by massive activity thrumming in the streets and thronging in workplaces. Many dissidents would say that real change, especially anything that threatens the power or wealth of the dominant classes, never originates within the institutions of our "democratic society." As long as there are rulers and ruled, owners and owned, any meaningful social change will be forced from below (pp. 19-20).

In addition, public sphere conceptions privilege a specific kind of discursive activity, rational-critical discourse. Yet experience shows that activists and movements engage in a wide range of discursive activity, which includes presenting and debating carefully measured arguments, but also includes graffiti, rude gestures and insults, sloganeering, deception, and other non-rational-critical ways of communicating. Indeed, some radicals, such as certain "post-Left" anarchists, openly reject the idea that presenting rational arguments is key to spreading insurgency. These perspectives,

* Although Habermas (1962/1991) suggests there can be alternative public spheres, he does not develop the idea of a non-bourgeois public sphere. As a result, Fraser notes (1990), "we are left at the end of Structural Transformation without a conception of the public sphere that is sufficiently distinct from the bourgeois conception to serve the needs of critical theory today" (p. 58).

admittedly a hard sell, do not reconcile easily with the idea of a public sphere, liberal or otherwise.*

Arguably, too, Habermas's conception of the public does not accurately capture the internet's nature as a realm of discursive activity. Whereas the bourgeois public sphere envisioned by Habermas "sought to form a common will," the internet "seems to fragment or at least question the idea of a universality or common interest, facilitating precisely the opposite—pluralism," according to Lee Salter (2003, p. 122). In addition, Salter observes,

> Habermas takes communicative action to be premised on the existence of criticizable validity claims. That is, whenever we act communicatively, we raise claims that the other party(s) in communication can question. In order for a speech act to be accepted, the hearer must be able to accept its truth, the corresponding normative basis, and the sincerity of the speaker. Of course, such criteria might be unavailable on the Internet (p. 136).

Public sphere conceptions also emphasize conciliation instead of conflict, and fail to consider non-discursive activity as it relates to media-movement interactions, topics I turn to below.

News Media as a Site of Struggle

The ideas of liberal democracy and the public sphere cast tensions between dominant and subaltern groups as reconcilable through the formal mechanisms of

* In fact, anarcho-primitivists such as John Zerzan (1999) reject symbolic thought altogether, including mathematics and even language itself (pp. 31-62). Anarcho-primitivism is a tendency within contemporary anarchism that critiques and rejects civilization and the processes which lead to it, such as industrialism and the transition from hunter-gatherer societies to agricultural ones. Anarcho-primitivists propose returning to a feral state by overcoming human domestication in a process called "rewilding." Notable anarcho-primitivist writers include Zerzan (1994; 1999; 2002; 2005; 2012) and Derrick Jensen (2000; 2002; 2006a; 2006b). Although Ted Kaczynski, the infamous Unabomber who mailed several explosives to various targets between 1978 and 1995, has criticized anarcho-primitivism for idealizing primitive societies (cf. Kacynski 2008), his manifesto resonated with anarcho-primitivists such as Zerzan after both the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* published it in 1995.

government and public debate on social-political issues. As we have seen, critics such as Fraser (1990) challenge this view by emphasizing the public sphere's exclusionary character. Another important criticism comes from the camp of radical anti-statists who have long considered liberal democracy a ruse. This perspective was articulated forcefully, for example, in Rudolf Rocker's (1938/2004) classic treatment of anarchism, which traces the demise of liberalism and democracy to the emergence of capitalist national economies in the late 18th century:

> Liberalism and Democracy were pre-eminently political concepts, and, since the great majority of the original adherents of both maintained the right of ownership in the old sense, these had to renounce them both when economic development took a course which could not be practically reconciled with the original principles of Democracy, and still less with those of Liberalism. Democracy with its motto of "equality of all citizens before the law," and Liberalism with its "right of man over his own person," both shipwrecked on the realities of the capitalist economic form. So long as millions of human beings in every country had to sell their labour-power to a small minority of owners, and to sink into the most wretched misery if they could find no buyers, the so-called "equality before the law" remains merely a pious fraud, since the laws are made by those who find themselves in possession of the social wealth. But in the same way there can also be no talk of a "right over one's own person," for that right ends when one is compelled to submit to the economic dictation of another if he does not want to starve (p. 10).

In addition to Rocker, countless anarchists, far left Marxists, autonomists, and other radical anti-capitalists have argued that corporate capitalism, which concentrates political-economic power into the hands of relatively few individuals, is incompatible with, and in fact works to undermine popular control over society's central institutions.* Today this idea enjoys strong cultural resonance, expressed for example in the Occupy

* The French political thinker Alexis de Tocqueville (1835-40/2003) also foresaw this. In Vol. II of his *Democracy in America*, he observed, "the industrial aristocracy which we see rising before our eyes is one of the most harsh ever to appear on the earth … this is the direction in which the friends of democracy should constantly fix their anxious gaze; for if ever aristocracy and the permanent inequality of social conditions were to infiltrate the world once again, it is predictable that this is the door by which they would enter" (p. 648).

Wall Street movement's slogan "We are the 99 percent," which highlights glaring class inequalities in the United States, an ostensible liberal democracy (Skonieczny & Morse 2014). It also finds contemporary expression in critical analyses of concentrated media power (e.g., Bagdikian 2004; Herman & Chomsky 1988/2002; McChesney 1999; 2004). I will have more to say about these issues later. The upshot is: In public spaces pervaded by corporate capitalist influence, such as the mass news media, elite views will generally prevail. For this reason, rather than focusing on governing mechanisms which facilitate conciliation between political-economic elites on the one hand and dissidents, activists, and oppositional movements on the other, radical anti-capitalists draw attention to enduring antagonisms between elites and their opponents, and the ways in which activists and movements develop forms of counterpower grounded in popular grassroots activity in order to displace elites' influence on society (Gordon 2008; Gramsci 1971; Guérin 1970; Schmidt & Van der Walt 2009).

Working within this broad tradition, I propose that an anarchist account of news media view media-movement interactions through a lens of conflict or antagonism, and consider the mediascape a contested terrain or site of struggle rather than as a more conciliatory, liberal public sphere. From an anarchist perspective, the primacy of conflict is key to conceptualizing the news media terrain. As social movement scholar Dieter Rucht (2004) observes, "All social movements strive to achieve certain goals. Therefore, at least implicitly, they reject goals that are incompatible with their own. In this broad sense, social movements always engage in a struggle against something or somebody" (p. 210).

The news media are, in fact, one of many sites of struggle where activists and dissidents contend with opponents. Other sites include, for example, schools, courts, neighborhoods, and the streets (Freire 1970/2000; Herod 2004; hooks 1994; Irons 1999;

Nomad 2013). Importantly, each site of struggle contains its own logic, limitations, and possibilities conditioning what activists can reasonably hope to accomplish. This applies to news media, where several antagonisms play out. In addition to political and class conflicts, which are the focus of this chapter and Chapter 5, activists and their opponents in the mediascape contend with one another over issues such as racial oppression, gender inequities, discrimination against LGBTQ people, the ecology crisis, and inhumane treatment of animals. According to Ryan (1991), organizers aim to turn news media into a "contested terrain," which presents an "opportunity for challengers, at a minimum, to point out that the establishment view is not the only or 'natural' way to look at a problem and, at best, to present an alternative" (p. 4).

Conflicts on this terrain have several dimensions. Struggles over the meanings of individual words constitute an important one (Del Gandio 2008; Edelman 1998; 2001; Herman 1982; 1992; 1995; 1999; Herman & Chomsky 1988/2002; Tarrow 2013). According to Edward Herman (1999), "The integration of word usage, framing, and source selection points up the fact that language is an arena of conflict and struggle. Word meanings, connotations, and applications are fluid and change in the course of struggle" (p. 283). In addition, "there are barriers to communication caused by the stratification of work in the interests of profit for production, barriers reflected in our language and in our tone of voice," writes Michael Duane (1990, p. 295).

For example, in news coverage reactionaries have endeavored to define 'strikes' as acts of labor violence and inconveniences to consumers, whereas unions have fought to define strikes as legitimate labor tactics to improve working conditions (Herman 1999, pp. 283-4; Martin 2004). For activist media makers, this can mean paying close attention to the language used in their own acts of cultural production, especially when the intent is

to rouse allies and sympathetic bystander publics (Del Gandio 2008; Salzman 2003). Former *Clamor* editor Angel (2008) writes:

> We tried to appeal both to activists and to what we called "supporters"—people who in general agree with activists' sentiments but haven't been moved to action, or those who feel isolated in their opinions. We made careful choices about what words to use, for example not using activist or anarchist, to avoid alienating these individuals while drawing out commonalities with which they could identify. Especially in the early years, we discouraged people from labeling Clamor as "the best new anarchist publication" (p. 9).

Herman and Chomsky's (1988/2002) propaganda model also highlights language conflicts arising out of news coverage of "worthy" and "unworthy" victims of oppressive and exclusionary policies. And there are, of course, several other discursive dimensions of conflict as they relate to mass media's adversarial roles.

Drawing on autonomist Marxism and ecofeminist theory, Dorothy Kidd (1998) argues that alternative and activist media makers are involved in building a "communications commons" that resists corporate and government attempts at media enclosure. By casting conflicts over the airwaves and cyberspace as a struggle between capital and its opponents, Kidd's account differs markedly from mainstream views, which focus narrowly on how corporations can best exploit these for economic gain (p. 58; see also Kidd 2003; 2010).

Conceptualizing news media as a site of struggle also points up dimensions of conflict that have implications for, but may only be indirectly related to, discursive activity, such as activist attempts to directly undermine the institutional supports for mass news media (e.g., advertisers, favorable government policies) and its interlocks with other centers of power. Public sphere accounts do a poor job of capturing this activity as well as various kinds of intermedia power plays, such as postage rate hikes that benefit large publishers but threaten small periodicals with higher operating costs and eventual

extinction (McChesney 2007b; Tady 2010). This opens the door to strategic conceptions that move beyond efforts to directly influence the production of news content, such as activist efforts to directly attack legal protections and forms of subsidy that large media companies benefit from. These and other non-discursive aspects of media-movement interactions remain, for the most part, undertheorized.

The Adversarial Press: Defenders of State-Corporate Power

The idealized view of the democratic capitalist press characterizes mass news media as a check on state-corporate power. Critical scholars and left-progressive activists challenge this view by proposing arguments which characterize the mainstream press as defenders of state-corporate power and opponents of activists, social movements, and even societal progress itself. As William Gamson and Gadi Wolfsfeld (1993) observe,

> There is … a fundamental ambivalence and, for some, estrangement between movements and media. Movement activists tend to view mainstream media not as autonomous and neutral actors but as agents and handmaidens of dominant groups whom they are challenging. The media carry the cultural codes being challenged, maintaining and reproducing them. In this sense, they are a target as much as a medium of communication (p. 119).

To begin, recurring themes or patterns in news content provide considerable evidence that mainstream news media promote or convey state, corporate, and other elite perspectives or agendas. This is especially true of "prestige" newspapers such as the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, which have enormous intermedia agenda-conveyance capabilities.[*] The three issues below highlight areas in coverage where

[*] As Ralph Nader (2002) puts it, "*The Washington Post* looks over the shoulder of the *New York Times* and vice versa, and the national networks read both papers every morning to see what is deemed significant" (p. 162).

mainstream news media play adversarial roles by aligning content with the agendas of political-economic power concentrations that most left-progressive activists oppose.

Foreign policy. Anti-war and left-progressive activists associate U.S. foreign policy with a long, violent history of misdeeds. Since the end of World War II, the United States has invaded, overthrown, or attempted to overthrow dozens of foreign governments (Blum 2004; Chomsky 1991; 2000; Kinzer 2006; LaFeber 1984; Zinn 1980/2003). It has also provided crucial material support to right-wing dictatorships and other authoritarian forces, by means of economic assistance as well as weapons flows and military training. Recipients of so-called "security assistance" include members of death squads and other human rights violators, many of whom studied at the notorious School of the Americas* located at Ft. Benning outside Columbus, Georgia (Brenner & Campbell 2000; Center for International Policy 2005; Clarke, O'Connor, & Ellis 1997; Gareau 2004; Gill 2004; Klare & Aronson 1977; McClintlock 1992; Nelson-Pallmeyer 1997; Schmitz 1999; 2006). In Latin America, where U.S. military influence has been especially pernicious, state terrorism—state-directed political violence against internal populations—has "developed as a product of a regional political structure in which U.S. political interests weigh heavily" (Menjívar & Rodriguez 2005, p. 3). U.S.-backed governments in Colombia, El Salvador, Chile, Guatemala, Argentina, and Peru have all committed acts of state terrorism on a massive scale, with a combined death toll reaching into the tens, if not hundreds of thousands of lives lost (Chomsky & Herman 1979; Gareau 2004; Grandin 2006; McClintlock 1985a; 1985b; 1992; Menjívar & Rodriguez 2005; Stokes 2005).

* In an obvious public relations maneuver, in January 2001 the military renamed the School of the Americas the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation. The school's purpose remains unchanged (Gill 2004).

The U.S. military and political establishments routinely justify inhuman, interventionist policies by appealing to principles of "humanitarian intervention" or by citing a need to protect U.S. citizens from foreign threats such as drug traffickers, communists, terrorists, and WMD-wielding foreign dictators (Chomsky 2003; Herman 1982; Shalom 1993). Critics and activists familiar with these issues, however, argue that U.S. interventions abroad are intended to extend an empire of U.S. military bases, integrate other countries into the U.S.-dominated global capitalist system, protect corporate investments in regions unsympathetic to the United States, or otherwise promote U.S. geostrategic interests, such as control over oil reserves and other natural resources (Blum 2004; Chomsky 1991; 2000; 2003; Johnson 2000; 2004; Kinzer 2006).

Press coverage of U.S. foreign policy is remarkably uniform; overall, it aligns with, or does not depart far from, official rationales for policy. For instance, a content analysis of 794 news items examining how the *New York Times* framed U.S. involvement in Colombia, a leading recipient of U.S. military aid, from 1997 to 2008 showed that the "paper of record" adopted the official U.S. position that military assistance was motivated primarily by counternarcotics concerns. This clashes with the critical, arguably more realistic view that the U.S. and Colombian governments use the "war on drugs" as justification for carrying out a military-paramilitary assault on left-wing guerrilla groups and their supporters. (Tedrow 2009; 2011). Turning to a more recent example of press negligence, major U.S. news outfits such as the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and influential television networks uncritically supported George W. Bush's unilateral decision to invade and occupy Iraq in March 2003. This occurred despite that the Bush administration offered dubious evidence about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction program, that the invasion violated principles of international law, and that Iraq did not pose any credible threat to the United States, let alone Iran and Kuwait – two neighboring

countries it warred with previously, with U.S. support (Chomsky 2003; Friel & Falk 2004; Rampton & Stauber 2003; 2006). In addition, the mainstream press uncritically supports U.S. allies such as Israel, Turkey, Colombia, and Indonesia, even when their governments commit war crimes, crimes against humanity, or other human rights abuses (Chomsky 1989; Friel & Falk 2007; Herman 1999; Herman & Chomsky 1988/2002; Herman & Peterson 2010; Tedrow 2009; 2011).

Economy. After the Civil War, U.S. corporations rapidly gained considerable cultural, political, and economic power, despite anti-monopoly laws (Nace 2003; Trachtenberg 1982/2007). In their "pathological" pursuit of profits (Bakan 2004), corporations use this power to roll back social safety nets enacted in the New Deal, to influence with financial support lawmakers and governments, to destroy unions and undermine workers, and to pressure for enactment of policies favorable to the profit goals that benefit the top 1 percent of the population, even in times of crisis. These interlocking outcomes lead radicals and some left-progressive critics to conclude that corporate capitalism and democracy are, in fact, incompatible with one another (Chomsky 1999b; Hertz 2002; Klein 2007; Nace 2003).

Yet mass news media are generally supportive of the U.S. system of corporate capitalism. Although the press may pillory specific companies for negligence and bad business practices, they attribute these to the actions of a few "bad apples" rather than flaws at the core of corporate capitalist ideology. Corporate perspectives pervade coverage of food and public health issues, such as carcinogenic chemicals that harm humans and the environment, as well as the federal regulatory agencies charged with monitoring these (Herman 1999, pp. 231-256; Lee & Solomon 1990, pp. 201-227; Rampton & Stauber 2001; Stauber & Rampton 1995). News media also negatively depict activists and sovereign foreign governments that reject neoliberal economic policies and

U.S. corporate influence, both at home and abroad (Chomsky 1995; Chernomas & Hudson 2011; Martin 2004). In addition, mainstream news media rarely contest elite interests, as well as misrepresent class conflict and the class structure of U.S. society (Allen & Savigny 2010; Kendall 2005; Lee & Solomon 1990, pp. 175-200; Martin 2004). Prestige newspapers such as the *New York Times* and *Financial Times* facilitate discourse among political and economic elites, quite separately from the mass public (Chernomas & Hudson 2011; Corcoran & Fahy 2009).

Politics. In the money-driven U.S. political system, business elites and not voters mainly determine policy; elections are occasions on which different sectors of the business community band together to throw their extensive monetary support behind preferred candidates in the Democratic and Republican parties, in order to invest in control of the state. This view of the U.S. political system—what political scientist Thomas Ferguson (1995) terms the "investment theory" of politics—is a strong predictor of policies and election outcomes. A recent analysis of the 2004 Annenberg National Election Survey by Thomas Hayes (2013) supports Ferguson's analysis, by showing that U.S. Senators are responsive to the concerns of their wealthy constituents, while neglecting the concerns of citizens on the lower economic rungs. What's more, the Democratic Party fares no better than the Republican Party on this count. Hayes writes that his analysis "suggests oligarchic tendencies within the American system" (p. 595).

These tendencies are a logical outcome of the growth in corporate power as well as steadily widening income differences between affluent and working Americans since the 1970s, when median real wages began stagnating. According to Nobel prize winning economist Joseph Stiglitz (2011), today the richest 1 percent of Americans take in nearly a quarter of all U.S. income and control 40 percent of the nation's wealth. The anti-poverty NGO Oxfam International (2015) predicts that the world's richest 1 percent will

control more wealth than the rest of the world's population by 2016. Another recent, comprehensive study of 1,779 policy issues by political scientists Martin Gilens and Benjamin Page (2014) finds that government policies reflect the wishes of economic elites and organized business groups, whereas average citizens and mass-based interest groups have a negligible influence on public policy formulation. For example, the political network of brothers Charles Koch and David Koch, the billionaire co-owners of Koch Industries, has given hundreds of millions of dollars to rightwing think tanks, political candidates, and lobbying groups in order to undermine liberal and progressive causes such as universal healthcare and environmental protections; the Koch network is expected to spend nearly 900 million dollars during the 2016 campaign season (Mayer 2010; Vogel 2015). It bears mentioning that oligarchic tendencies and the exclusionary character of the U.S. political system help explain why some Americans choose to join social movements rather than place their faith in the system.

Mainstream political news coverage troubles activists because it is oriented toward a political system dominated by two business parties, which narrowly defines options for civic engagement and political participation. Simply put, the press is neither fair nor balanced in its treatment of activists, movements, and third-party candidates who attempt to break from convention. U.S. presidential election coverage provides a useful illustration. When the progressive consumer advocate Ralph Nader ran for president in 2000 on the Green Party ticket, he received almost no press coverage. The coverage he did receive typically took the form of a feature story—"a modestly colorful narrative dispatch from the trail with a marginal candidate"—rather than a news story about his political agenda (Nader 2002, p. 163). When Nader announced his candidacy at a press conference in early 2000, "the announcement earned a three-hundred-word squib in the *New York Times*, akin to the amount of space they devote to a couple of marriage

notices." The *Washington Post* did not even bother to send a reporter (Nader & Amato 2001, p. 164). As Nader and his then-campaign manager Theresa Amato observe:

> [A]t the end of the day, the only thing the press cares about is the horse race and whether a third-party candidate is "stealing" votes from either or both of the major party candidates. The use of the press's language itself is indicative of the two-party mind-set: a candidate who competes in a primary is accorded equal footing as a "challenger" with the "frontrunner," while a third-party candidate who competes in the general election is considered a "spoiler" for daring to enter the duopolists' playing field (ibid.).

Nader was even physically denied access to the presidential debates. In October 2000, at the first presidential debate at the University of Massachusetts, the Commission on Presidential Debates (CPD)—a private firm established by Democrats and Republicans in 1987 to sponsor and produce debates between presidential candidates—used state troopers to block Nader from listening to the debates or talking to the media, even though he had been invited to do so (p. 170).

The Adversarial Press: Suppressing Dissidents and Activists[*]

The historical trajectory of the American Left appears as somewhat unusual. In a history spanning two centuries, movements and political parties describing themselves as social democratic, progressive, leftwing, Labor, socialist, or Communist have failed to make major inroads in the U.S. political system, even though leftist movements have done so in every other democratic country (Archer 2008; Davis 1986; Foner 1984; Lipset & Marks 2000; Sombart 1906). Why this occurred is a timeless debate among historians and leftists; as a theoretical dilemma it weighed heavily on early 20th century Marxists, because classical Marxism predicted that, as the most advanced industrialized country,

[*] My examination of the issues in this section owes much to the influence of Jules Boykoff's (2007) excellent study, Beyond Bullets: The Suppression of Dissent in the United States.

the United States would usher the world into a socialist future. Historians, sociologists, and left-progressive thinkers propose many explanations for why the Old Left's socialist vision failed to materialize, including: the exclusionary character of the U.S. political system (Davis 1986; Lipset & Marks 2000); so-called "American exceptionalism," exemplified by ample social and geographical mobility opportunities, relatively high standards of living, liberal values, and America's lack of a feudal past and working class consciousness (Hartz 1955; Lipset & Marks 2000; Sombart 1906); Americans' libertarian and individualist sympathies (Lipset & Marks 2000; Moody 1988); sectarianism, opportunism, and the split between the U.S. labor movement and the Socialist Party (Archer 2008; Bell 1952/1996; Davis 1986; Lipset & Marks 2000); political, cultural, ethnic, religious, and racial tensions within the working class (Archer 2008; Davis 1986; DuBois 1935/1998; Foner 1982; Roediger 1991/2007; 2005; Saxton 1971); and political repression of laborers and activists (Archer 2008; Carey 1997; Lipset & Marks 2000; Norwood 2002; Sexton 1991).

Although a deep examination of each of these themes falls outside the scope of this study, the intense debate over the Old Left's unrealized socialist vision is important because it illustrates that a complex stew of historically situated cultural, political, and economic factors may explain why oppositional political projects succeed or fail. It is rarely the case that one factor alone explains a movement's demobilization.* Causes of demobilization are, in fact, an undertheorized area in social movement studies: Scholars have focused intently on the origins of contentious collective action, such as how

* For instance, reflecting on their experiences in the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, former New Left activists have suggested that movements foundered due to flaws in activists' analyses, activities, and radical ideologies (e.g., Albert 1974; 2006b; Ayers 2001; Haynie 2009; Rudd 2009). These explanations locate the proximal causes of movement demobilization as internal to movements; although there is a great deal of truth in radical criticisms of New Left ideology, especially of Marxism-Leninism and Maoism, these explanations do not give much consideration to disruptive forces external to movements, such as the state, the Ku Klux Klan, or mass news media.

movements emerge and their opportunities for expansion, but have said relatively little about later phases in the lives of movements, such as the factors that lead to their eventual decline (Boykoff 2007, p. 14; McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly 2001, pp. 42-3; Voss 1996). As Jules Boykoff (2007) observes,

> While most studies on dissident citizens and social movements explore the emergence, growth, and effectiveness of social movements, they virtually ignore the failure of movements to emerge, grow, become influential, maintain solidarity, meet their collective goals, and the factors—both internal and external—that play into this failure (p. 14).

Among the factors which have hobbled organizing and activism in the United States, Boykoff and others argue that scholars and activists have not paid sufficient attention to modes of political repression and suppression, even though these do exist in advanced democratic capitalist societies (e.g., Blackstock 1975; Boykoff 2006b; 2007; Carey 1997; Churchill & Vander Wall 1990a; 1990b; Wolfe 1978). Boykoff (2007) draws a useful distinction between repression and suppression. Whereas *repression* refers to direct violence used to coerce or silence dissidents and activists, *suppression* can be defined as "a process through which the preconditions for dissident action, mobilization, and collective organization are inhibited by either raising their costs or minimizing their benefits" (p. 12). This definition initiates new exploration in that it does not necessarily link suppression to the actions of the state; in other words, corporations and other non-state actors (for instance, the Ku Klux Klan) can also produce forms of social control. They can act in place of the state as surrogate defenders of state objectives. Suppression encompasses repression, but also includes subtler forms of control, including those which impact activists as well as the general public and potential allies.[*]

[*] For instance, enormous debts incurred by consumers and students arguably suppress contemporary social movements: Many people saddled with debt simply cannot afford to participate in movements or activism, because arrests endanger employment opportunities. Major economic crisis like the 2008 collapse of the

By preconditions for dissident action, Boykoff means "factors that organizationally, operationally, strategically, or tactically make dissent more possible" (p. 13). These factors include the ability of activists and movements to: 1) maintain solidarity; 2) attract new recruits; 3) create and nurture leaders/leadership; 4) generate media coverage; 5) mobilize support from "bystander publics"; and 6) carve out tactical freedom to pursue socially transformative goals (ibid.). These actions also require the right to assemble peaceably and redress grievances against actors other than the state. In the repression of union activists, for example, corporations can call upon city and state power to protect corporate interests.

Many Americans are unaware that compared to other industrialized countries, the United States has an unusually violent labor history (Chomsky 2002, p. 193). In the early 20th century, conflict between laborers and private and state security forces resulted in the deaths of several hundred workers, including executions of anarchists and radical unionists, as well as physical injuries to thousands (Adamic 1931/2008; Avrich 1984; Brecher 1972; Noorwood 2002; Sexton 1991; Zinn 1980/2003). Among radical left tendencies—those that have historically identified with causes such as anti-colonialism, radical environmentalism, anarchism, socialism, and communism—throughout the 20th century, state and federal agencies targeted their movements with violence and other forms of coercion in order to neutralize or eliminate perceived subversive elements (Boykoff 2007; Carey 1997; Churchill & Vander Wall 1990a; 1990b; Redden 2000; Williams 2015). State suppression of oppositional movements has not abated in the 21st century, either, as law enforcement agencies continue to target anarchists, animal liberation activists, and radical environmentalists (Boykoff 2006b; 2007; Chang 2002;

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mortgage industry that saw record numbers of Americans displaced by foreclosure eliminated the possibility of sustained activism to address the financial fraud that brought about this situation.

Del Gandio & Nocella 2014; Potter 2011; Williams & crow 2015). Commenting on the nationally coordinated police crackdown of the Occupy Wall Street movement that began in New York's Zuccotti Park in September 2011, journalist Chris Hedges has said, "The state was quite rattled by the Occupy movement and is determined not to allow a movement, a mass movement like that to rise up again" (Jay 2013).

The mainstream news media do not sit on the sidelines of suppressive activity, reporting on events as neutral, disinterested observers. Historically, the press plays an important role in suppressing activists and dissidents in the United States, reinforcing other modes of social control perpetuated by the state and powerful corporations (Boykoff 2006b; 2007). In his important study of activist suppression in the United States, Boykoff (2007) identifies six main ways in which the mass news media directly and indirectly work to suppress dissidents, activists, and movements: mass media manipulation, bi-level demonization, mass media deprecation, mass media underestimation, false balance, and disregard. These adversarial functions are natural corollaries to the mass media's role as a promoter of state-corporate perspectives.

Mass media manipulation. The state directly interferes in mass news media production by implanting stories and strong-arming journalists. Story implantation can take the form of either "black propaganda" or "gray propaganda." As Boykoff explains (2007), "Black propaganda involves the use of fabricated documents assiduously designed to forge schisms or prevent solidarity between social movement organizations." (p. 126; see also Churchill & Vander Wall 1990a, p. 42). This occurs in press coverage of activists when the state provides false news stories to journalists, who then publish these either verbatim or nearly verbatim. Gray propaganda occurs when the state feeds "calculated misinformation" to the press and electronic media, in order to discredit and sow tensions

among activists (Churchill & Vander Wall 1990, p. 43; Boykoff 2007, p. 126). Both black and gray propaganda involve manipulating "friendly" journalists and editors working in the mass media (Boykoff 2007, p. 179).

Black and gray propaganda operations are both relatively rare, but specific examples are well documented. For instance, during the 1960s and 1970s, under the umbrella of the FBI's COINTELPRO—an extensive, nationwide counterintelligence program, the purpose of which was to disrupt and neutralize activist groups and movements—federal agents provided false stories and misinformation about New Left activists and groups to their allies in the mass news media, in order to create schisms, marginalize activists, and weaken public support. In addition to disrupting New Left groups such as Students for a Democratic Society, these acts of media manipulation targeted famous organizers such as Martin Luther King, Jr., as well as groups such as the Black Panther Party, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the Nation of Islam, and scores of other social movement organizations that the FBI deemed subversive (Blackstock 1975; Boykoff 2007, pp. 176-190; Churchill & Vander Wall 1990a; 1990b; Cunningham 2004; Drabble 2008; Glick 1989). As Boykoff (2007) observes, story implantation is exceedingly rare, because journalists typically already frame stories in ways that align with elite interests (pp. 179-180), a topic discussed below.

In addition to feeding black and gray propaganda to "friendly" journalists, the state strong-arms the mass news media by censoring the press and intimidating reporters and editors. Heavy-handed press censorship—e.g., legal prohibitions on criticizing the U.S. military during World Wars I and II, which was considered seditious (Carey 1997; Rabban 1997; Washburn 1986)—is now rare, but the Pentagon continues to control coverage of war through the controversial practice of "embedding" journalists within military units (Boykoff 2007, pp. 186-187; Buchanan 2011). According to Paul Buchanan

(2011), in the post-Vietnam War era, U.S. military officials saw critical coverage as problematic because it undermined public support, which threatened war efforts themselves. From a military perspective, embedded journalism seeks to correct this by promoting favorable coverage of U.S. military forces. For example, during the 2003 invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq, embedded journalist accounts of the conflict were more favorable in tone to U.S. forces than unembedded accounts were. In addition, embedded reporters made little effort to report accurately on the human toll incurred by Iraqi civilians, as well as biasedly characterized those who fought back against U.S. forces as "insurgents" rather than as resistance fighters (Jamail 2007; Kuypers & Cooper 2005; Pfau et al. 2005). Meanwhile, unembedded reporters such as Dahr Jamail (2007) presented readers with haunting stories about the occupation's ramifications for ordinary Iraqis.

Although it is rare, the state also censors journalists by denying or revoking access to conflict/disaster areas and military installations. When Ronald Reagan directed U.S. forces to invade Grenada in October 1983, in violation of international law, press censorship was total during the first 48 hours of the attack, forcing journalists to rely on second-hand information provided by the military (Linfield 1990, p. 158; Project Censored 2015). As Michael Linfield (1990) observes, "From the government's viewpoint, the blanket denial of access to the press was successful since it prevented questioning of administration propaganda and policy" (p. 158). Press censorship in Grenada worked so well that when U.S. forces invaded Panama in December 1989 to oust strongman and former CIA asset Manuel Noriega, the military restricted reporters to a "media pool" responsible for covering military actions. These journalists were confined to a windowless room at Fort Clayton, where they were allowed to cover propaganda briefings but were not allowed to exercise journalistic initiative by observing the conflict

firsthand (p. 158-159). Even today, Panamanian victims and their families do not know how many died during the assault, although the Central American Human Rights Commission estimates the death toll may have been as high as 3,000. These types of restrictions are not limited to coverage of conflict areas: When Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans in September 2005, the Federal Emergency Management Agency also moved to block journalists from covering body recovery efforts.

Another strong-arming tactic is journalist intimidation. For example, the administrations of U.S. presidents Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, and George W. Bush all moved to intimidate journalists by phoning their bosses to criticize news coverage, freezing out uncooperative reporters, wiretapping phones, or warning Americans to "watch what they say, and watch what they do," as White House Press secretary Ari Fleischer told reporters shortly after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks (Boykoff 2005, pp.188-189). Perhaps the most aggressive action was taken by the Reagan administration, which expanded and used the Office of Public Diplomacy headed by Otto Reich to pressure newspaper editors. It became routine for editors to receive calls from Reich conveying the president's displeasure about coverage of events in Central America, where the Reagan administration was carrying out acts of international terrorism against the Sandinista government of Nicaragua. Personal visits to newsrooms were not uncommon (Sklar 1988). According to Holly Sklar, (1988) "Reich acted as a quasi-government censor, monitoring and pressuring the news media to toe the administration line and accusing critical reporters of being agents of Nicaraguan disinformation" (p. 245). As Bill Buzenberg, who became vice president of National Public Radio, recounted these activities, "Reich bragged that he had made similar visits to other unnamed newspapers and major television networks…Reich said he had gotten others to change some of their reporters in the field because of a perceived bias, and that

their coverage was much better as a result" (Buzenberg quoted in Sklar 1988, p. 246).* More recently, journalist Will Potter (2011) has described how the FBI threatened to add his name to a domestic terrorism list if he did not provide information about animal rights groups.†

For the most part, though, the mass news media suppress dissidents and activists in more subtle ways. The following suppressive techniques identified by Boykoff (2007, pp. 191-260) are all closely related to the concept of framing, which according to Todd Gitlin (1980) refers to "principles of selection, emphasis, and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens, and what matters" (p. 6). As noted earlier, I will examine framing theory in more detail in Chapter 5.

Bi-level demonization. This suppression technique refers to "the state and mass media linking dissidents to a demonized group or individual from the international arena, even if the activists are not working directly with or supporting the demonized external foe materially or ideologically. As long as the social movement *appears* to be supporting the external demon, even if tacitly, bi-level demonization may kick into motion" (Boykoff 2007, p. 191; emphasis in original). The veracity of state claims is largely irrelevant; links between activists and external enemies can be real, imagined, or fabricated (p. 192-3). This technique has been used extensively throughout U.S. history, particularly in

* Mark Hertsgaard (1988) has also described how the Reagan administration manipulated the prestige press, as well as the press's complicity in these activities.

† As a matter of disclosure, I should mention that in May 2010, two Texas Rangers sought me out while I was attending graduate school in Austin to interview me about any information I might have related to the arson attack on the Texas Governor's Mansion that occurred on the morning of June 8, 2008. Most of their questions focused on my close personal friend Roberto Garcia (1985-2008), who was one of approximately thirty suspects the Texas Rangers told me they were considering. After viewing surveillance footage of the suspect, I told the Rangers I could not identify the person in the video. They also questioned me about whether anarchist groups might have been responsible for the fire. After replying that I seriously doubted my friend or local anarchists had anything to do with the incident, they sent me home. Although I have not heard from the Texas Rangers since being interviewed in 2010, the experience had a chilling effect.

wartimes as a way to paint dissident citizens as unpatriotic (Boykoff 2007). For instance, the mass news media exaggerated links between international Communists and the movement against the Vietnam War (Gitlin 1980). Bi-level demonization has been especially potent in the post-9/11 political environment, where in addition to targeting terrorists overseas, Congress and President George W. Bush gave the federal government sweeping powers to suppress domestic groups and individuals also deemed to be "terrorists," such as anarchists, radical environmentalists, animal liberators, and religious (primarily Muslim) groups (Boykoff 2006b; 2007; Chang 2002; Del Gandio & Nocella 2014; Human Rights Watch 2014; Potter 2011).

Mass media deprecation. In addition to painting domestic activists as linked with foreign enemies, the mainstream press more directly frames activists, dissidents, and movements in unfair or deprecatory ways. For example, mainstream press coverage of the 1999 protests against the World Trade Organization in Seattle overwhelmingly frames members of the alter-globalization/global justice movement as violent, lawless, disruptive, out-of-touch with the rest of civil society, and ignorant of the issues they organize around (Boykoff 2006a; 2007, pp. 216-246; Martin 2004), rehashing several themes that appeared in mainstream press coverage of the 1960s student movement against the Vietnam War (Gitlin 1980). To take another example, media scholars Michael Parenti (1986) and Christopher Martin (2004) argue the mainstream press frames organized labor and unions, a legitimate social institution, in deprecatory ways, such as by depicting organized workers as unreasonable and obstinate, or as a threat to consumers' economic well-being.

Mass media underestimation. The mainstream press frequently underestimates the scope of movement activity, or the scale of specific actions, such as how many people attended a protest march or demonstration (Boykoff 2007, pp. 248-250; Gitlin 1980; Small 1994). Journalistic routines—in particular, reliance on official sources for crowd size estimates—contribute to mass media underestimation, which allows police and other officials to project the image that they have protestors under control. As Boykoff (2007) observes, "During the breakdown of social order that often accompanies social-movement activity, the state is frequently seen by the mass media as an objective source of information and looked to for the restoration of public confidence" (pp. 250-251). Similarly, the mainstream press underestimates the scale of public support for movement activity (Parenti 1986), even when this support is significant and may lead to shifts in state or corporate policies.

False balance. The mainstream press falsely balances coverage by giving equal treatment to activists and counterdemonstrators. This creates the "impression of dueling protestors," which "conveniently omits the fact that the forces are unequal, that one side has many more protestors, while the other side may have only a handful of supporters. In turn, this 'balance' is a powerful political tool that government officials can use to downgrade dissidents, arguing that their numbers are not overwhelming or significant" (pp. 250-251). For example, mainstream press coverage of the movement against the Vietnam War gave comparable page space and air time to demonstrators and counterdemonstrators alike, even though antiwar demonstrators consistently outnumbered pro-war activists (Gitlin 1980).

Disregard. Finally, the mass news media help to undermine dissidents and activists by not covering them. According to Boykoff, "When the mass media disregard social movements, they exert a subtle form of suppression that affects the ability of dissidents to maintain morale, to gain new adherents, or to get taken seriously by potentially bystander publics" (p. 252). This invisibilization is a form of censorship by exclusion.

The Adversarial Press: Audience Influence

My presentation of media's adversarial roles vis-à-vis dissidents, activists, and movements so far has focused on problematic aspects of news media content and its production. Dissidents and activists also characterize mass news media as adversarial because of its complex, frequently negative effects on audiences. Unfortunately, an in-depth examination of this issue is well beyond the scope of this study. News media's effects on audiences are of concern to activists because audiences encompass activists and dissidents involved in other movements, as well as "bystander publics," defined as nonadherents who do not oppose a social movement or its organizations, but who merely witness its activities (McCarthy & Zald 1977; Turner 1970). According to social movement scholars John McCarthy and Mayer Zald (1977), a crucial task for social movements is to convert these nonadherents into adherents, i.e., "individuals and organizations that believe in the goals of the movement" (p. 1221). However, the mass news media arguably thwart these conversion efforts by promoting or instilling false understandings, cynicism and apathy, and ideological beliefs.

False understanding. Mass news media circulate texts and images that instill false or flawed understandings about society, politics, economics, culture, and humans'

relationship with the natural world. This information deficiency indirectly suppresses social movements because activists can find it difficult to communicate with, let alone win over, those who hold opposing, false beliefs. For instance, mainstream press coverage of climate change is horribly flawed, in large measure because journalists produce dramatized stories which play up looming crises over sober, macroscopic treatments, as well as falsely balance authoritative, scientific consensus with sources who deny that anthropogenic climate change even occurs. This has clear implications for policy—not to mention human survival—as public perceptions of the dangers caused by climate destabilization will influence which actions are taken to address our planet's cascading ecological crises (Boykoff 2007; Boykoff & Boykoff 2004; 2007; Lorenzoni & Pidgeon 2006).

To take another, well known example, in the lead-up to the March 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, the mainstream press perpetuated several lies, now well-known, about the U.S. rationales for invading, which originated from the administration of President George W. Bush (Bennett, Lawrence, & Livingston 2007; Gershkoff & Kushner 2005; Rampton & Stauber 2003). As a result of these distortions, an October 2003 survey conducted by the Program on International Policy Attitudes found that:

> [A] significant portion of the American public has held a number of misperceptions that have played a key role in generating and maintaining approval for the decision to go to war. Significant portions of the public have believed that Iraq was directly involved in the September 11 attacks and that evidence of links between Iraq and al-Qaeda have been found, that weapons of mass destruction were found in Iraq after the war and that Iraq actually used weapons of mass destruction during the war, and that world public opinion has approved of the US going to war with Iraq (p. 2).

These widespread public misunderstandings about the reasons for the U.S. invasion of Iraq hampered the antiwar cause. Moreover, the intense stream of pro-war

propaganda coming from the Bush administration White House, emphasizing "Arab extremism" and "Islamic fundamentalism," fueled anti-Arab racism in the United States, which hampered activists and organizers engaged in other causes, such as Palestine solidarity work.

Cynicism and apathy. The mass news media's emphasis on the game of politics rather than on substantive political issues activates widespread public cynicism, or the absence of trust in political actors, processes, or institutions (Cappella & Jamieson 1997; Lawrence 2000; Pedersen 2012; Shehata 2014; Valentino, Beckmann, & Buhr 2001). Activist theorist Cynthia Kaufman (2003) argues that the mass media encourage people to view human connections as corrupt and social movements as ineffectual, which allows systems of domination to secure consent (pp. 251-267). Political cynicism is closely linked with voter apathy. Most public opinion polls show that about three in four Americans disapprove of Congressional inaction (Real Clear Politics 2013), and Obama has not brought about the changes many progressives hoped he would (NPR 2013).

According to liberal media critic Marty Kaplan, Americans do not rise up in protest because mass media packages news as "infotainment," which distracts citizens from taking action to address pressing issues such as health care, economic corruption, and climate change. "We have been taught to be helpless and jaded, rather than to feel that we are empowered and can make a difference," Kaplan told independent journalist Bill Moyers in a 2013 interview on July 12. In addition to "infotainment," both parties' allegiance to wealthy constituencies helps explain why most voters show little interest in the U.S. political process, even when there are charges of election fraud, such as in the presidential elections of 2000 and 2004. To quote Chomsky (2004), "If one is flipping a coin to the pick the king, it is of no great concern if the coin is biased" (p. 223).

Ideological beliefs. Activists and dissidents also argue that the mass news media circulate texts and images which reinforce ideological beliefs about corporations, government, the environment, and social and cultural reality. According to Robert Jensen (2001),

> Even though it may seem that, in the post-Cold War era, capitalism has "won," smart capitalists understand that victory is always tentative. Today, working people and the unions that once created a channel for working people's power are on the defensive, but thoughtful capitalists know quickly that can change. Hence the need for intense ideological control and indoctrination (p. 32).

I will examine the issues of ideological control and indoctrination in more detail in Chapter 5, which takes up the issue of media hegemony.

Alternative Opponents and Mainstream Allies

A final comment on media's adversarial roles: To a lesser extent, critics characterize alternative or activist media as adversarial. For instance, many left-progressive activists are critical of contemporary anarchist and Marxist publications for putting forward strident editorial positions which, they argue, sow disunity on the left. Meanwhile, anarchists and Marxists chastise liberal and progressive publications such as *Huffington Post* and *The Nation* for "selling out," supporting big business and/or the Democratic Party, or for throwing radicals, progressives, and third-party candidates under the bus. In addition, internecine debates between radical groups and personalities frequently play out online—through email, blogs, and other websites—as well as in the pages of movement publications. These attacks fragment countless groups and causes, as well as injure the left's overall esprit de corps.

It is not always the case that mass news media perform adversarial roles vis-à-vis activists and social movements, either. As social movements grow and gain political

legitimacy and social influence, the mainstream press often will either ally with them, or at least come to identify with some or all of their major goals. Indeed, over the past century this has been the case for most major U.S. social movements that achieved lasting gains. For instance, the main positions of the Civil Rights Movement—that racial segregation and discrimination should be illegal—are now journalistic common sense, and several major papers have even apologized for their neglectful reporting on civil rights issues during the 1950s and 1960s (Heckman 2013).

To take another example, in Texas over the past two decades editorial boards at major state newspapers have adopted positions that the death penalty should either be abolished or have a moratorium placed on it. These editorial positions align with the goals and policy preferences of the anti-death penalty movement but stand in stark opposition to the state's pro-death penalty, dominant Republican culture.

News Media as Tools and Resources

In addition to constituting a site of struggle and performing several adversarial functions vis-à-vis activists and social movement actors, mainstream and alternative/activist media may be thought of as tools and resources that present strategic/tactical opportunities for activists and movements, who use both as vehicles for recruiting members, intragroup communication, crystalizing movement goals, strategies, tactics, and analyses, building public support, pressuring power holders, and spreading information to bystander publics and other activists (Atton 2002; Atton & Hamilton 2008; Downing 2001; Gitlin 1980; Kessler 1984; Ostertag 2006; Ryan 1991; Salzman 2003; Streitmatter 2001). The difference between mainstream and alternative strategies may be thought of as the difference between playing an "insider game" versus an

"outsider game," respectively, although it is not necessarily the case that one approach will produce preferable results (Ryan 1991, p. 5).* The concept of media activism itself is broad†, but there are three basic approaches related to news media.

- Activists may try to influence mass news media content by capturing its attention, such as by staging protests and demonstrations, holding news conferences, and issuing press releases (Gitlin 1980; Kahn 1991; Ryan 1991; Salzman 2003).
- Activists may try to create mass news media content by producing their own stories, working closely with sympathetic journalists, or writing op-eds and letters to the editor (Jensen 2001; Kahn 1991; Ryan 1991; Salzman 2003). After leaving the news industry, award-winning journalist A. Kent MacDougall (1988a; 1988b) published a two-part essay for *Monthly Review*, in which he revealed that he had been a socialist during his ten-year employment with the *Wall Street Journal*, all the while writing for radical publications under pseudonyms.
- Activists may produce alternative/activist media (Angel 2008; Armstrong 1981; Atton 2002; Atton & Hamilton 2008; Downing 2001; Kessler 1984; Ostertag 2006; Streitmatter 2001). This eschews mass media involvement. According to

* Deana Rohlinger (2015) draws another useful distinction: "There are two kinds of media: direct media, which are created by activists associated with a movement group, and external media, which use a particular set of norms and practices to create a media product that (ideally) generates profit from consumer sales and advertising. Direct media typically include newsletters, pamphlets, websites, listservs, forums, videos/documentaries, and songs or radio programming produced by group activists, while external media include mainstream and alternative news outlets (on- or off-line), radio stations, blogs, commercial documentaries, concerts, and social media. The distinction between direct and external media is important because while all movements may use mass media, not all groups choose to regularly engage media over which they have little to no control" (p. 5).

† Other forms of media activism may include, for instance, composing and playing/distributing radical music, wheatpasting signs or tagging property with political graffiti, radical (street) theatre, hacktivism, and culture jamming, i.e., the practice of subverting mainstream cultural symbols and institutions, often by altering the signs and logos of influential corporations (Cohen-Cruz 1998; 2005; Collin 2013; Danaher 2010; Klein 2000; Lasn 2000).

> Kidd (2010), activists and social justice groups "developed alternative media as a tool for community building and as part of the articulation and circulation of their own self-directed expertise, social identities, and analyses" (p. 203). Alternative media may also influence mass news media content indirectly via intermedia agenda-setting and other processes, although interactions between mainstream and alternative media remain undertheorized.

Ideally, seasoned activists will weigh a number of strategic considerations when deciding whether to try to use the mainstream press, produce alternative news media, pursue both options, or do neither. Strategically relevant factors related to news media activism include:

Target audience. Different forms of news media (print, television, radio, and/or web), as well as different news organizations within established mediums, specifically target or are more likely to reach certain audience demographics. For example, it is well documented that Millennials* consume more news online and with digital devices than their elders, who are more likely to watch televised news or listen to radio broadcasts (Pew 2015). Thus, an activist media campaign aimed at audiences in their 20s or 30s would likely perform better if it were launched on social media such as Facebook rather than delivered via public radio broadcasts. Other demographic information relevant to media activism may include audience members' genders, sexual orientations, political outlook, and socioeconomic status. Activists engaged in media work may seek to reach some or all of the following groups:

* As distinct from Baby Boomers (adults who were born between approximately the end of World War II and the early 1960s) and Gen Xers (those born between the mid-1960s and early 1980s), Millennials are the demographic cohort born between the early 1980s and early 2000s.

- Policy makers and power holders – for instance, to demand a stay of execution for a death row inmate;
- Journalists and other media-makers – to attract initial coverage or influence how an issue is being treated in the media;
- Other activists and dissidents – to rally allies to a cause;
- International audiences – for instance, to arouse international solidarity or attract the attention of foreign governments and international governing bodies such as the International Criminal Court or United Nations;
- Niche audiences – this may include historically marginalized groups and minorities.

Opportunity costs. Certain opportunity costs correspond to choosing certain media strategies over other available options, which may include time, money, and material resources available to activists and organizers. For instance, a small group may decide that, because it does not have enough members or public support to stage a televised protest, a better tactic might be to have one of its members appear on a radio or television talk show.

Skills and talent. Activists may decide to use media strategies which play to their strengths. For instance, tech-savvy activists may create their own websites and do outreach through social media online, rather than seek the attention of the mainstream press. The activists who established Indymedia in 1999, for instance, drew on their extensive experience using computers and web technologies (Kidd 2003; 2010; Pickard 2006; Wolfson 2012).

Goal consonance and ethical-political convictions. Activists may use tactics and strategies because they believe they are best suited for reaching their goals. Activists and organizers may also prefer approaches that are consonant with their deepest ethical-political convictions.

Of course, some activists may pursue media strategies with no consideration of these or other factors.

LINKING THE BATTLEGROUND, ADVERSARY, AND TOOLS/RESOURCE CONCEPTIONS

Each of the three roles described above suggests a different approach to thinking about news media-movement interactions. Importantly, each role offers only a partial understanding. For instance, if activists dwell only on media's adversarial functions, viewing mainstream news media mainly as opponents or obstacles to movement building, and not as tools or resources, they are unlikely to pursue strategies that involve influencing journalists or seeking mass news media coverage. Meanwhile, activists who fail to appreciate media's adversarial functions may feel stymied in their efforts to attract favorable coverage, because they do not fully appreciate how and why power warps the production of news content.

The three roles outlined above also suggest different ways of thinking about activists' agency. Conceptions of media that focus only or predominantly on its adversarial functions cast activists and movements as mainly victims of suppression. On the other hand, focusing on how activists actually use and create forms of news media allows us to see them as agents of change. Thinking about media as a site of struggle also

shifts the focus away from activists as passive victims of negative coverage, to rational actors who develop media strategies to pursue their goals.

Chapter 5: Anarchism and Critical Media Theories

Over the past half-century, leftwing and progressive academics, watchdog organizations, and other critics have responded to the explosive growth in corporate news media power with a large, penetrating body of research and theory describing how this power operates, from whence it comes, and why it threatens democracy and human freedom.* Thanks to the efforts of prominent activist-scholars (e.g., Bagdikian 2004; Chomsky 1989; Gitlin 1980; Herman & Chomsky 1988/2002; Herman 1982; 1992; 1995; 1996; Herman & Peterson 2010; Lee & Solomon 1990; McChesney 2000; 2004; Miliband 1969; Parenti 1986; 1992; Schiller 1969/1992; 1973; 1989; 1996), alternative news media and journalists, and news monitoring groups such as Project Censored and Fairness and Accuracy In Reporting,† today most left-progressive and radical anti-capitalist elements in the United States appreciate that social movements must directly confront the "problem of the (mainstream news) media" to further political, economic, and cultural struggles (Gitlin 1980; McChesney 2004; 2008b; Ryan 1991).

At the same time, among activists, academics, and other informed critics, there does not appear to be widespread agreement about what, exactly, constitutes this problem or on what the strategically relevant features of news media are. Activists proffer uneven, conflicting accounts of the mainstream press, as well as lean on diverse theoretical perspectives to support their claims. Meanwhile, scholars who critique different aspects of mass news media—such as its content, effects on audiences, ideological assumptions,

* Criticisms of contemporary mainstream corporate media have notable historical antecedents (McChesney & Scott 2004; Reynolds & Hicks 2012; Sinclair 1919/2003). Surveying a century of critiques of U.S. news media, Robert McChesney and Ben Scott (2004) argue that, far from being a "fringe phenomenon," radical press criticism "can make a legitimate claim to being *the* mainstream tradition of a free press in the United States" (p. 7; emphasis in original). See the introduction to McChesney & Scott (2004), pp. 1-30.

† Several left-progressive alternative media devote sections of their publications to press criticism. In fact, the magazine *Extra!*, the official organ of Fairness and Accuracy In Reporting, is given over entirely to critiquing mass news media content through the lens of fact checking and political economy.

and institutional structure—often stop short of promoting strategies or tactics that activists might develop to challenge these powerful institutions. Arguably it would benefit both camps to seek more common or comparative ground; instead we find a disconnect between those who research corruptions of information power and those who stand to benefit from this research. Moreover, some research conclusions seem speculative when proposing what effect media has on the general public.

Radical communications scholars are uniquely positioned to pick up where most critics leave off, by analyzing and assessing different accounts of media power, tracing their ideological roots, subjecting them to academic scrutiny, and most importantly, mapping, cataloging, and promoting their strategic and tactical implications for social movements (Frey & Carragee 2007; McChesney 2007a; Martin 2010; Shantz 2008; Ryan 1991). Reflecting on these matters also presents an opportunity to continue theorizing about news media along anarchist lines. In addition to providing a lens through which one may examine news media's informational power, anarchism provides a basis for interrogating other critical theories and concepts related to news media. This can carve out new ground for anarchism within academic discourse on media and communications, by showing how anarchist conceptualizations challenge, differ from, or bear similarities to other approaches.

To these ends, this chapter examines three different theoretical perspectives from which activists, academics, and other critics often draw to examine or explain media-movement interactions and/or the power of mass news media: framing, media hegemony, and critical political economy. These three were selected because they represent conceptually broad, relatively popular, well-developed perspectives among critical scholars and left-progressive activists in the United States. Moreover, each theory addresses questions that are on the minds of those who dwell on the issue of media

power. Importantly, each one offers only a *partial* explanation; in an important sense, framing, media hegemony, and political economy accounts attempt to fill explanatory gaps left by one another (Maxwell 2001; Shoemaker & Reese 1996; Ryan 1991). Of course, examination of any theory or group of theories will provide an incomplete picture. For example, it is possible to bring anarchism to bear on other important critical perspectives, such as feminism and critical race theory, or even more mainstream academic theories of news media, such as agenda-setting theory and gatekeeper/organizational models (e.g., Lewin 1947; McCombs 2004; McCombs & Shaw 1972; Shoemaker 1991; 1996; Shoemaker et al. 2001; White 1950). Likewise, it is possible to analyze through an anarchist lens various attempts at synthesis, such as Ryan's (1991) important work, which incorporates insights from different theoretical perspectives. Although I may reference ideas or recast arguments from some of these studies, tackling them directly falls outside the scope of the present work. For each perspective, this chapter will take up the following questions:

- *Theoretical content*. How does each perspective account for media-movement interactions and/or the power of mass news media? Does it try to explain the corrupting influence of power on the production of news media content, the effects of news content on movements or media audiences, both, or something else entirely?
- *Implications for strategy*. What does each perspective imply for activist or movement tactics and strategy? How do these strategic implications relate to other activist concerns? What political consequences are associated with these implications?

- *Anarchist interrogation*. How does each perspective stand in relation to anarchist thought and practice? On what grounds does anarchism challenge or possibly modify each of these theoretical perspectives? How does anarchism denaturalize or defamiliarize, i.e., problematize, the taken-for-granted, commonsense assumptions involved with each theory and its strategic implications?

I should note that, in presenting and assessing these theories, it is not my intent to weigh every important objection that critics and scholars direct at them. For example, I am aware that journalism scholars have sought to cast doubt on critical political economists' contention that media consolidation erases a diversity of perspectives. Although I disagree with the defenders of capitalist media systems in this instance, it is beside the point. Rather, my aim is to present these theoretical accounts based on how their advocates understand and use these concepts, tease out their implications from an activist perspective, and assess these theories and their implications from an anarchist perspective.

NEWS MEDIA FRAMING AND THE PROTEST PARADIGM

Mainstream and alternative news media present readers, viewers, and listeners windows onto the world, but do not necessarily mirror social, political, or economic realities. In addition to selecting and presenting events, images, and sounds for public consumption, news media also interpret their meanings, contextualize information, and speculate about their consequences (Entman 1993; 2004; Gitlin 1980). This phenomenon is called *framing*, and interpretations of events are called *(news or media) frames*. According to Gitlin (1980):

> Media frames, largely unspoken and unacknowledged, organize the world both for journalists who report it and, in some important degree, for us who rely on their reports. Media frames are persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual. Frames enable journalists to process large amounts of information quickly and routinely: to recognize it as information, to assign it to cognitive categories, and to package it for efficient relay to their audiences. Thus, for organizational reasons alone, frames are unavoidable, and journalism is organized to regulate their production (ibid., p. 7).

Gitlin is concerned with media frames, but in a broad sense framing can refer to how individuals, groups, or institutions analyze, label, make sense of, and/or make connections among different aspects of social phenomena (Goffman 1974). For instance, sociologists use framing theory to explain how social movement participants define social problems, formulate strategies, and spur calls to action (Benford 1993; Snow et al. 1986; Benford & Snow 2000; Johnston & Noakes 2005; see also Part III in McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald 1996). Among journalism and mass communications scholars, framing theory is commonly used to analyze political news coverage, especially coverage of elections and governmental policy (e.g., D'Angelo & Kuypers 2010; Entman 2004; Iyengar 1991; Reese, Gandy, & Grant 2001). Scholars also use the concept to analyze media treatment of activists and movements (e.g., Ashley & Olson 1998; Boykoff 2006a; Di Cicco 2010; Gitlin 1980; Martin 2004; Xu 2013).

Political communications scholar Robert Entman (2004) provides a robust account of framing and framing functions. He writes that framing means "selecting and highlighting some aspects of events or issues and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution" (p. 5; see also 1993, p. 52). According to Entman (2004), media frames perform some or all of these four basic functions:

- *Defining problems*. Media frames define effects or conditions as problematic. This is one of the two most important framing functions, because problem definition "often virtually predetermines the rest of the frame" (p. 6).
- *Identifying causes*. In defining problematic effects or conditions, media frames also locate their causes.
- *Conveying moral judgment*. In addition to identifying problems and locating their causes, media frames convey moral judgment on those deemed responsible.
- *Endorsing remedies*. Finally, media frames suggest or endorse remedies or solutions to effects or conditions defined as problematic. According to Entman, this is the second of the two most important framing functions, "because it directly promotes support (or opposition) to public policy" (ibid.).

As Entman observes, "All four of these framing functions hold together in a kind of cultural logic, each helping to sustain the others with the connections among them cemented more by custom and convention than by the principles of syllogistic logic" (p. 6). To illustrate how these functions work together, consider post-9/11 news coverage of the U.S.-led "war on terror," inaugurated by the administration of President George W. Bush. In mainstream framing of U.S. foreign policy, the threat of international terrorism was defined as a problem that the United States must confront, with or without the support of the international community. Foreign actors such as al Qaeda, the Taliban, and Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein were framed as the principal instigators or causes of terrorism – even erroneously in the case of Saddam, where U.S. media repeated false claims that Iraq harbored weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and maintained important links to al Qaeda, the group presumed responsible for the 9/11 attacks. Rather than asking what might have motivated the attacks, or questioning the Bush administration's claims

about Iraq's WMD program and supposed links to al Qaeda, instead the mass news media overwhelmingly conveyed negative moral judgment on these actors. Rather than consider options such as international law enforcement or take seriously the reports by the international team sent to investigate the existence of WMD who reported that no such weapons were found anywhere after extensive searching—conclusions backed up by invading forces—the mass news media framed U.S. military intervention targeting foreign terrorist groups and Saddam's regime as ethically appropriate means to address the problem of terrorism (Bennett, Lawrence, & Livingston 2007; Chomsky 2001a; 2003; Entman 2004; Friel & Falk 2004; Gershkoff & Kushner 2005; Nikolaev & Hakanen 2006; Rampton & Stauber 2003; 2006).

Framing theory holds that the mass news media are predisposed to frame news coverage in ways that promote elites' preferred policy options and dominant political interests (Carragee & Roefs 2004; Entman 2004; Gitlin 1980). Thus, it provides a theoretical account of corrupted informational power. As the above example shows, this is especially true in coverage of U.S. foreign policy, where frame construction privileges the state's view of problems, causes, moral judgments, and solutions over other available options. In the lead up to the March 2003 invasion of Iraq, the global anti-war movement coordinated enormous public protests against the war—indeed, the largest protests in recorded human history—which identified U.S. foreign policy as problematic and advocated peaceful alternatives to the Bush administration's unilateral war plans. Nevertheless, antiwar frames and voices, such as those who urged that the United States follow international law, were virtually absent from mainstream press coverage of the attack, while official, pro-war frames and voices dominated (Chomsky 2003; Friel & Falk 2004; Hayes & Guardino 2010; Rendall & Broughel 2003; Whiten 2004).

Arguably, antiwar frames failed to gain traction because it is difficult for activists to displace or undermine the strong influence of elite narratives, especially after an invasion begins. As William Dorman (2006) observes, "the only meaningful time to debate the need for war is before one begins; it is too late once it is underway. History is abundantly clear that the myth of war, once a war starts, has a power to overwhelm culture and public discourse, and therefore takes over thought to an extraordinary degree" (p. 11). Indeed, social pressure to conform includes claims that to criticize or question is not patriotic. Excluding antiwar voices subtly suppresses peace-seeking activists, groups, and movements because it short-circuits opportunities for these actors to reach wide audiences, recruit new members, or meet other preconditions for action, mobilization, and organization (Gitlin 1980; Boykoff 2007).

There appears to be wider latitude in framing domestic policy issues, such as immigration, same-sex marriage, and abortion, as well as international concerns such as climate change, reflecting more divergent attitudes among policy makers and elites. However, even in these cases the parameters for debate within coverage are largely predetermined by policy makers' views on which options are politically feasible (Bennett 1990; Shehata & Hoppman 2012). Mainstream press coverage of the recent health care debate, for example, framed single-payer and public option healthcare proposals as impractical, and their advocates as naïve, childish, or socialist, even though the public option had overwhelming public support and was cheaper than the pharmaceutical industry's proposals. Commenting on the tone of the coverage, press critic Michael Corcoran (2010) observes,

> Progressive ideas with majority popular support are falsely portrayed as radical, ideological fantasies, while those who oppose them are praised as pragmatic and reasonable. … "Pragmatic" is a curious way to describe letting the public option

die; how practical is it to make a bill more expensive and less popular? But this framing has been commonplace throughout the debate.

Entman (2004) distinguishes between frames and schemas; whereas frames refer to interpretations of reality found in media texts, *schemas* are clusters of ideas and feelings stored in people's memories. Schemas connect with one another in individuals' knowledge networks, and once a schema becomes incorporated into a person's long-term memory, new knowledge and schemas can bring to mind associated feelings, images, and concepts. This occurs through a process called *spreading activation*, which depends on a kind of semantic priming. According to spreading activation theory, when concepts are activated in memory, related concepts are activated as well. Spreading activation means just that: Rather than evoking singular ideas, phrases, or images, a concept can rapidly "spread," activating several associated concepts at once.* For example, for many U.S. citizens the phrase "September 11" evokes several images related to the 9/11 terrorist attacks: Osama bin Laden, the collapse of the World Trade Center buildings, rescue efforts, and subsequent U.S. military action against al Qaeda, the Taliban, and Iraq. Moreover, these images are more likely to be evoked than, say, images of baseball games or dinosaurs (Anderson 1983; 1990; Collins & Loftus 1975; Entman 2004, pp. 6-9; Lodge, McGraw, & Stroh 1989; Lodge & Stroh 1993). Entman (2004) argues that the theory of spreading activation gives elites compelling reasons for wanting to impose their own interpretations on news coverage of important political events as early as possible: "A dominant frame in the earliest news coverage of an event can activate and spread congruent thoughts and feelings in individuals' knowledge networks, building a new event schema that guides responses to all future reports" (p. 7).

* These activations do not occur randomly. As Jonathan Schooler and Sonya Dougal (1999) observe, "the direction and extent of the spread of activation critically depends on (a) the specific items that were activated and (b) the underlying structure of an individual's knowledge representation" (p. 352).

Likewise, framing and spreading activation are of interest to activists and dissidents because initial coverage of a cause or movement can set the tone for future coverage. When negative frames and deprecatory themes surface early in news accounts, they become hard to displace. For instance, in Gitlin's (1980) landmark study of mainstream press coverage of Students for a Democratic Society, he observes that the *New York Times*'s first in-depth story on SDS—a March 15, 1965 front page story by reporter Fred Powledge—"derived its information from within the radical student orbit, and conveyed respect and a certain distanced sympathy. It cited the movement's preferred labels, and not those of opponents; it took at face value the radicals' own statements of belief; and it spoke from the perspective of the students, even when it proceeded toward balance" (p. 36). This respectful, sympathetic treatment proved to be a fluke, however, as deprecatory themes and framing devices soon cemented themselves in coverage of SDS, in line with the media's overarching pro-war narrative. Ultimately, argues Gitlin, the pro-war orientations of the *New York Times* and CBS News motivated these news organizations to frame SDS in ways that helped both to build and unmake the New Left groups and movements of the 1960s. Even today, the mass media and intellectual culture treat these groups and movements with an air of disdain.

The mainstream press frames activists and their concerns around dominant frames and news narratives, which puts challengers who do not share these assumptions at a disadvantage (Gitlin 1980; Ryan 1991; Tarrow 2011). As Ryan (1991) observes,

> Dominant frames have ideological inertia on their side, i.e., they build on assumptions so taken for granted that mainstream media perceive them as the only logical approach to a situation. Conversely, challengers present unknown information organized around unfamiliar political assumptions. The resulting frames initially seem strange, forced, or unnatural to the mainstream media and its audience. … One of the most common forms of distortion involves the rendering

> of challenger perspectives from within the logic of the dominant perspective (p. 68).

For instance, antiwar activists may find it difficult to frame U.S. interventions abroad as motivated by geopolitical concerns, despite overwhelming evidence to support this interpretation (Blum 2004; Chomsky 1991; 2000; 2003; Johnson 2004; Kinzer 2006; LaFeber 1984), because this characterization directly contradicts mainstream accounts depicting U.S. military attacks on foreign countries as well-meaning attempts at democracy promotion. Dominant frames can also distort media characterizations of activists' range of concerns. According to Gitlin (1980), the *Times* and CBS News framed their coverage of SDS around the issue of the Vietnam War, with the result that SDS was narrowly conceptualized as an anti-war group. However, in actual practice SDS was a multi-issue organization, which embraced a broad, radical agenda and worked on many different political projects simultaneously. The group's founding document, the Port Huron Statement, articulated from a radical left perspective several concerns and policy recommendations regarding such issues as the nuclear arms race, the military-industrial complex, racism, colonialism, and the class character of U.S. society (Gitlin 1980; Hayden 1962/2005).

The mainstream news media relies on other important frames and narrative devices as well—in particular, a "protest paradigm" that characterizes coverage of activists, dissidents, protestors, groups, and movements. The protest paradigm focuses, somewhat superficially, on the *spectacle* of social protest rather than on the *concerns or issues* that motivate people to engage in activism in the first place. By obscuring the root causes of activism and protest, and by failing to provide media audiences with multiple perspectives and information that might spur people to take action, this paradigm supports the status quo and marginalizes challengers (Ashley & Olson 1988; Boykoff

2007; Boyle, McLeod, & Armstrong 2012; Brasted 2005; Chan & Lee 1984; McLeod & Hertog 1999; McLeod 2007; Rauch et al. 2003). The protest paradigm is far from monolithic, especially in online coverage of movements (e.g., DeLuca, Lawson, & Sun 2012; Harlow & Johnson 2011), but research suggests that the more radical a group or movement is, the more closely mainstream coverage of it will resemble the characteristics of the routinized template (Boykoff 2007; McLeod 2007; McLeod & Hertog 1999; Shoemaker 1984). Recycled across decades, social issues, and geographic diversities, its themes and frames include:

Official perspective. Rather than turn to activists, organizers, and other non-elite sources, mainstream news accounts of activism, protests, and other social movement activities often rely on the views of experts, police, government figures, business leaders, and other official sources to explain protests and underlying issues (Boykoff 2006a; Brasted 2005; Dardis 2006; Gitlin 1980; McLeod & Hertog 1999; Xu 2013). This is because journalists' reliance on accessible, official sources—who can provide quotes and information quickly and succinctly—"gives news stories prestige, increases news production efficiency, and adheres to the rituals of objectivity," observes Douglas McLeod (2007, p. 186-187; see also McLeod & Hertog 1999). Journalists also turn to official sources as a way to shield themselves from criticism, such as accusations of bias (Gans 1979; Tuchman 1972; 1978). According to sociologist Gaye Tuchman (1972), "objectivity refers to routine procedures which may be exemplified as formal attributes … and which protect the professional from mistakes and from his critics. It appears the word 'objectivity' is being used defensively as a strategic ritual" (p. 678).

Official frames are not merely the product of journalists' normal newsgathering routines, however. After all, governments, corporations, and law enforcement

organizations have been using sophisticated public relations techniques for well over a century (Bernays 1928/2005; Carey 1997; Cutlip 1994; 1995; Olasky 1987). It is important to recognize that official sources actively construct and promote frames, and that these have tangible consequences for activists and movements, such as official frames which provide police agencies with autonomy to suppress challengers to the status quo (Boykoff 2006b; 2007; Cunningham & Browning 2004; Gitlin 1980; Noakes 2000).

Ineffectiveness. Rather than highlight organizational strength, the mass news media frame activists and movements as disorganized, ineffective, ignorant of issues, and incapable of articulating realistic goals, demands, or messages. News accounts attribute this to several factors, such as intra-organizational conflict, disarray, dissension, and bad or nonexistent leadership (Ashley & Olson 1988; Boykoff 2006a; 2007; Di Cicco 2010; Gitlin 1980; Xu 2013). For instance, mainstream accounts of the second wave feminist movement emphasized dissension within its ranks, and coverage of the anti-WTO protests and the Occupy Wall Street movement framed activists as not being united in their goals, demands, or messages (Ashley & Olson 1988; Skonieczny & Morse 2014; Xu 2013). The protest paradigm's focus on actions rather than issues strengthens perceptions that activists are inept. As McLeod (2007) observes:

> The media often fail to adequately explain the meaning and context of protest actions, leading the audience to perceive them as futile, pointless, and even irrational. Journalists may further delegitimize protests by judging them as futile or as failures, ignoring many of the latent functions of protest groups (e.g., spreading information, generating resources, building solidarity among individuals and coalitions among like-minded groups, etc) (p. 187).

Deviant behavior, language, and appearance. Mainstream media commonly paint activists and dissidents as countercultural deviants, nonconformists, and freaks, by

drawing attention to their unusual clothing, personal appearance (piercings, tattoos, etc.), diets, sexual orientations and behaviors, races and ethnicities, speech, and ages (Ashley & Olson 1988; Boykoff 2006a; 2006b; 2007; Dardis 2006; Gitlin 1980; Mendes 2011). For example, media coverage of the second wave feminist movement critiqued women's aberrant appearances and used nonspeech quotation marks around words such as "women's movement" and "liberation" to denote that these ideas should not be taken seriously (Ashley & Olson 1988, p. 268).

News media often highlight deviant characteristics in order to promote status quo distinctions between legitimate and illegitimate participants within movements, which some activists might view as being part of a divide-and-conquer strategy. Mainstream coverage of the women's movement constructed "ordinary," liberal feminists—women who were described as attractive, heterosexual, well educated, housewives, and/or mothers—more positively than it did deviant feminists, i.e., radical women who were described as militants, lesbians, and "extreme feminists" who hated men (Mendes 2011; see also Ashley & Olson 1988). In addition, other female sources were often used to discredit these radical feminists. As Kaitlynn Mendes (2011) observes, "The use of *female* voices … helps to legitimise a rejection of the movement because women *themselves* do not want it" (p. 493; emphasis in original).

Violence, lawlessness, and the threat to social order. The mass news media demonize activists and social movements by associating them with criminal behavior, general lawlessness, and acts of violence, and by framing police forces as responsible for restoring and maintaining social order. This theme runs through coverage of anarchists, radicals, and economic issues such as strikes and protests against neoliberal policies and

institutions, e.g., the WTO and G-20* (Boykoff 2006a; 2006b; 2007; Dardis 2006; Douai 2014; Gitlin 1980; Hertog & McLeod 1995; Martin 2004; Rauch et al. 2003; Xu 2013). Whereas mass media sanitizations of state violence help to justify suppressive policies, framing activists as threats to the social order plays an important role in delegitimizing dissent and protest in democratic capitalist societies (Boykoff 2006a; 2006b; 2007; Chomsky 1989; 1997; 2001b; Douai 2014; Herman & Chomsky 1988/2002).

Public threat/nuisance. Mainstream news accounts often suggest that members of the general public and protestors share fundamentally different interests, by characterizing the latter as anti-American, unpatriotic, and/or harmful to society and the economy – in other words, as public threats or nuisances. This framing strategy assumes that citizens should put their faith in the state and corporations, that protestors have no business trying to bring about change, and that activism and protests cause more trouble than they are worth, especially when these actions disrupt commerce and people's daily lives (Brasted 2005; 2014; Di Cicco 2010; Hertog & McLeod 1995; McLeod 2007; Martin 2004). Martin (2004) writes:

> The news media disapprove of collective action—including strikes, slowdowns, boycotts, and protests—with a number of standard canards: It is inflationary, un-American, protectionist, naïve, causes bureaucratic red tape, disrupts consumer demand and behavior, foments fear and violence, etc. The frame carries an underlying assumption: that economic intervention by citizens should happen only at the individual level…. Of course, individual action preempts collective action, which is more democratic and potent. But, politics outside the reigning corporate-political structure is largely disdained, if not usually ignored, by the press (pp. 10-11).

* The Group of Twenty (G-20) is an international economic forum for Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the European Union. In June 2010, the G-20 summit in Toronto was the target of massive protests and demonstrations, in which more than 20,000 police, security, and military personnel were called in to subdue half as many demonstrators.

The public menace/nuisance frame relies on journalists and their sources making sweeping generalizations about public attitudes (Hertog & McLeod 1995; McLeod 2007). As McLeod (2007) observes,

> Most protest stories do not contain reports of actual public opinion polls, with the occasional exception for issues like abortion and anti-war protests. It is actually more common for reporters or the sources they quote to make generalizations about public opinion on protest issues or about public reactions to the protesters (p. 187).

FRAMING'S IMPLICATIONS FOR STRATEGY

According to Gitlin (1980), although it is difficult to pin down framing's effects, we can speak of the *significance* of frames as well as their complex political *consequences* (pp. 127-8). As we have seen, an important consequence of pro-status quo news framing is that it minimizes the threat posed by challengers. Dominant frames and the protest paradigm are of significant interest to activists, then, because one-sided media constructions of movements and social issues influence public support and opportunities for social-political change. At the same time, research on dominant frames and the protest paradigm may be faulted for exhibiting a kind of tunnel vision, insofar as studies focused on mass media's adversarial role tend to obscure other important dimensions of framing, such as how framing theory casts the news media as a site of struggle; how activists and movements cultivate and promote their own frames; and framing contests between activists and their opponents (Gamson & Meyer 1996; Gamson & Wolfsfeld 1993; Gitlin 1980; Lakoff 2004; Ryan 1991; Ryan, Carragee, & Meinholder 2001; McAdam 1996b; Zald 1996). As Ryan (1991) observes:

> Framing is more than a process of interpreting selected events; it is actually the process of *creating* events, of signifying, from the vast pool of daily occurrences, what is important. Struggles over framing decide which of the day's many

> happenings will be awarded significance. Today, the media have become critical arenas for this struggle, and social movements have increasingly focused on the media since it plays an influential role in assigning importance to issues facing the public. But gaining attention alone is not what a social movement wants; the real battle is over whose interpretation, whose framing of reality, gets the floor (p. 53; emphasis in original).

Framing theory throws up a dilemma. On the one hand, protest paradigm studies suggest that activists who seek to gain media attention should expect that the mainstream media will distort or marginalize their viewpoints and messages. On the other hand, activists and the news media arguably need one another: Social movements provide dramatic stories that journalists crave, and the mass media certify protests and movements as important in the public eye (Gamson & Wolfsfeld 1993, pp. 116-117; Gitlin 1980, p. 24). Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993) argue as well that social movements need the mass media in order to mobilize people, validate their status as important political actors, and broaden the scope of conflict (p. 116). For these reasons, theorists argue that generally speaking, activists should err on the side of seeking rather than avoiding media attention (Gamson & Wolfsfeld 1993; Gitlin 1980; McAdam 1996b; Ryan 1991). Keenly aware of the pitfalls and possibilities associated with mass media engagement, activists tend to agree. According to McAdam (1996b),

> Activists are neither deluded into thinking the media are important nor driven by their egos to court media attention. The simple fact is, most movements lack the conventional political resources possessed by their opponents and thus must seek to offset this power disparity by appeals to other parties. The media come to be seen … as the key vehicle for such influence attempts (p. 346).

Moreover, capitalist-owned websites such as Facebook and Twitter can be a major unifying tool and indeed journalists turn to social media in search of newsworthy trends, emerging political concerns, and movement building stories, as occurred during the Occupy Wall Street and Black Lives Matter movements.

Mobilization and cohesion within social movements depend on movement participants constructing, maintaining, and altering a collective identity, i.e., a sense of belonging to the movement (Melucci 1989, p. 34). Framing theorists argue that identity constructions are proffered and affirmed through engagement in collective action itself, as well as through collective action framing processes (Benford & Snow 2000; Hunt, Benford, & Snow 1994; Snow et al. 1986). "Not only do framing processes link individuals and groups ideologically but they proffer, buttress, and embellish identities that range from collaborative to conflictual," according to Hunt, Benford, and Snow (1994, p. 185). Through intragroup discursive activity, movement participants form collective identities as well as define grievances, social problems, their causes, and strategies for addressing them. Increasingly, social media and other internet-based tools facilitate the formation of these collective identities (Harlow & Guo 2014).

Gamson (1990) writes that a collective action frame "has three elements: (a) it defines the root of the problem and its solution collectively rather than individually; (b) it defines antagonists—'us' and 'them'; and (c) it defines an injustice that can be corrected through the challenger's action" (p. 155). Benford and Snow (2000) define collective action frames as "action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movement organization" (p. 614). They write:

> [Framing] denotes an active, processual phenomenon that implies agency and contention at the level of reality construction. It is active in the sense that something is being done, and processual in the sense of a dynamic, evolving process. It entails agency in the sense that what is evolving is the work of social movement organizations or movement activists. And it is contentious in the sense that it involves the generation of interpretive frames that not only differ from existing ones but that may also challenge them. The resultant products of this framing activity are referred to as "collective action frames" (ibid.).

An important part of movement recruitment is "frame alignment," which refers to "the linkage of individual and SMO [social movement organization] interpretive orientations, such that some set of individual interests, values and beliefs and SMO activities, goals, and ideology are congruent and complementary" (Snow et al. 1986, p. 464). Activists and movements encourage frame alignment in various ways, such as by trying to appeal to other, sympathetic activists, or by stretching their frames to accommodate diverse views. When collective action frames resonate with or appeal to audiences, i.e., the targets of mobilization, they achieve "frame resonance" (Benford & Snow 2000; Snow & Benford 1988; Snow et al. 1986). That is to say, successful frames work because people find them convincing or appealing.

Framing theory's main strategic implication for media activism, then, is that activists can work to counter the influence of dominant framing and the protest paradigm by articulating and promoting their own collective action frames in the mass media arena (Gitlin 1980; Ryan 1991; Ryan, Carragee, & Meinholder 2001; Zald 1996). Of course, it not as if the mass media will unproblematically transmit a faithful interpretation of a group or movement's collective action frame. Thus, there are important considerations involved with these "strategic framing" processes (Ryan 1991; Smith 2002; Zald 1996).

Framing and Cultural Resonances

To begin, although framing struggles are informational struggles, they are not merely disputes over which side has its facts straight. Indeed, two or more competing frames may all convey true information (Ryan 1991, p. 54-56, 79). Framing struggles can be understood only within the context of a society's culture—its shared beliefs and understandings, symbols, and language—because framing contests are born from cultural

breaks and contradictions (Gitlin 1980; Ryan 1991; Zald 1996). These contradictions "occur and lead into mobilization when two or more cultural themes that are potentially contradictory are brought into active contradiction by the force of events, or when the realities of behavior are seen to be substantially different than the ideological justifications for the movement," writes Zald (1996, p. 268). Activists and movements actively construct strategic frames in order to draw attention to cultural contradictions. For example, by recognizing and articulating the contradiction between democratic values and the unequal treatment of women and people of color, activists in the United States since the 1950s have been able to force the issues of racism and sexism onto the public stage. According to Ryan (1991), every society features cultural resonances in which challengers can base their own frames.

> Cultural resonances are used to shape generally recognizable plots (rags to riches, power corrupts). They offer easily recognized social/cultural stereotypes of characters (evil villains, honorable victims, noble heroes and heroines), and they reinforce general social goals, i.e., the underlying or implicit values that shape the way the mainstream media organize their impressions of society. For the United States, these include belief in capitalist democracy, centrism in political thought, and emphasis on individualism. … The more a frame draws from the rich web of cultural resonances, the more likely it will be accepted as the obvious, natural way to interpret reality (pp. 79-80).

Large movements also cultivate culturally resonant "master frames" that later movements may draw on; these are generic collective action frames that shape discourse within movements, appeal to broad, diverse audiences, and influence activists' tactical decisions. For example, several left-progressive movements operate under a nonviolence master frame, which originated with the civil rights movement, and as a result find it difficult to use or endorse violent tactics. The civil rights movement also provides language, as well as an equal rights and opportunities master frame, which several other movements have adopted and incorporated into their specific movement campaigns

(Benford 2013; McAdam 1996a; Snow & Benford 1988; 1992; Zald 1996, p. 269). As framing theorist Robert Benford (2013) observes:

> Whereas most collective action frames are context specific (e.g., drunk driver frame, cold war frame, exploited worker frame, environmental justice frame, etc.), a master frame's articulations and attributions are sufficiently elastic, flexible, and inclusive enough so that any number of other social movements can successfully adopt and deploy it in their campaigns. Typically, once a social movement fashions and espouses a highly resonant frame that is broad in interpretive scope, other social movements within a cycle of protest will modify that frame and apply it to their own cause.

Journalistic Codes and Templates of Organization

Besides tapping into culturally resonant themes, activists must also frame information and messages in ways that conform to journalists' needs. Research confirms that reporters, editors, photographers, and other newsworkers are not passive conduits for frames and information; they work with established routines and practices, which allow them to produce news relatively easily and efficiently, and are sensitive to perceived threats to their objectivity and autonomy (Gans 1979; Schudson 2011; Sigal 1973; Tuchman 1972; 1978). Moreover, as David Altheide (1976) argues, "the organizational, practical, and other mundane features of newswork promote a way of looking at events which fundamentally distorts them" (p. 24). In order to limit this distortion and attract journalists' attention, activists make use of several templates of organization and repertoires of contention, i.e., techniques of social protest (Ryan 1991; Tarrow 2011; Tilly 1977; 1995; 2008; Zald 1996).

Templates of organization refer to skills and technology of communication that may be drawn from the whole society; media-related templates of organization that activists commonly rely on include writing op-eds and letters to the editor, granting

interviews to journalists, appearing on talk shows, issuing press releases, holding press conferences, creating websites, and using social media. Repertoires of contention, on the other hand, are available from the whole social movement sector; media-related repertoires of contention that activists commonly use include protests and demonstrations, picket lines, public acts of civil disobedience, street theater, and various kinds of political violence (Kahn 1991, pp. 204-221; Ryan 1991; Salzman 2003; Zald 1996, p. 267).* Effectively using both sets of tools requires activists to understand various aspects of how journalists and the mass news media operate. Although an in-depth evaluation of specific framing-related media tactics falls outside the scope of this study, relevant concerns include: journalistic conceptions of newsworthiness, packaging news stories, attention-grabbing visual elements, what makes for a good soundbite or slogan, and so on (Jensen 2001; McHale 2004; Ryan 1991; Salzman 2003).†

Often, though, sensitivity to journalists' needs means playing into the logic of the protest paradigm, which values spectacle over ideas. Research indicates that a group's tactics—more than its goals—influences how much and what kinds of coverage it will receive (Boyle, McLeod, & Armstrong 2012; McLeod 2007). "A peaceful protest that focuses on articulating issue positions is not likely to fit established news conventions for what makes a good news story. As such, protest groups often engage in activities that provide the kind of drama that garners media attention," observes McLeod (2007, p. 185). Boykoff (2006a) argues that journalistic norms bracket mass media's framing

* From an anarchist perspective, certain repertoires of contention are of concern because their use depends in the first place on the approval of authorities, such as parades and marches, which require permits. Similarly, authorities' attempts to impose so-called "free speech zones" at protests and on university campuses are clearly attempts to enclose public space and render activists toothless.

† For an excellent (if somewhat dated) compendium of activist media tactics, see Jason Salzman's (2003) *Making the News: A Guide for Activists and Nonprofits*. See also George Lakoff's (2004) *Don't Think of an Elephant! Know Your Values and Frame the Debate—The Essential Guide for Progressives*.

practices, which pressures activists to radicalize their tactics and rhetoric to gain attention:

> The interplay between social movements and the mass media results in a dialectic of escalation in which dissidents feel pressed to amp up their tactics. Escalation is both a reaction to the ability of social movement opponents to adapt to previous tactics as well as the result of the mass media's unquenchable penchant for novelty. Dissident challengers, who are almost by definition at a disadvantage in terms of social status and resources, often try to make up for these limitations by engaging in exceptional, creative actions that are designed to gain mass-media attention. Carrying out contained, sanctioned actions is not likely to get mass-media attention, but disruptive, novel events improve the chances of mass-media interest. This creates a dilemma where dissidents feel compelled to foment protest activities that are novel enough to be newsworthy, yet not easily dismissible as gimmicky, violent, or weird, or that distract from or trivialize their social movement goals. This can be a fine line to walk. Even if social movements are successful in garnering mainstream press, they nevertheless have to ceaselessly adapt since what is considered exceptional, and therefore newsworthy, is an ever-shifting category. This all leads to the fomentation of "pseudo-events" characterized by inflated rhetoric and militancy beyond the group's capabilities, which sets the table for mass-media deprecation (p. 203).

Moreover, once a large national movement—e.g., the civil rights movement, the New Left, Occupy Wall Street, or Black Lives Matter—finds itself in the media's "floodlit social terrain," there is no going back (Gitlin 1980, pp. 1-3). This suggests that activists should tread carefully when stepping into the spotlight.

Framing and Alternative/Activist Media

Framing theory also points to the significance of activist/alternative media as a tool or resource. William Gamson and David Meyer (1996) write that "movement organs can play an important role as an organizing resource. They convey activist frames and information, and can become part of a shared movement culture. On a more mundane level, they can provide a reliable source of organizing information, such as where and

when a demonstration will take place" (pp. 287-288). Available framing research also suggests that activists have more latitude in strategic framing online than conventional mass media permit; however, it is unclear whether activists fully take advantage of the framing opportunities posed by online media (DeLuca, Lawson, & Sun 2012; Harlow & Johnson 2011; Zoch et al. 2008). Arguably, capitalist-owned social media such as Facebook, Tumblr, and Twitter mitigate these concerns because they allow activists to take advantage of media consumption habits in the socio-technological complex by directly reaching a potentially ever-growing group. However, activists who rely exclusively or primarily on these social media for outreach are playing in someone else's sandbox.

Avoiding Media Coverage: A Non-Implication

Finally, framing theory is notable for what it does *not* imply. As noted above, based on the available framing research, theorists conclude that although media treatments may be problematic, activists should nevertheless seek media attention. Yet this perspective overlooks that there they may be important reasons not to seek coverage. For example, movements often expend considerable resources in efforts to respond to the tactics of the dominant frame (Ryan 1991). Rather than waste resources to engage in framing struggles, activists may find that a more sensible course of action ignores or avoids framing contests altogether. In addition, framing accounts overlook that silence can serve a strategic purpose when activists confront certain dilemmas, such as: whether to engage with media outlets external to social movements; whether to respond to negative media coverage; and how to address or publicly deal with losing issues (Rohlinger 2015, pp. 5-10). Building on this insight, Deana Rohlinger advocates a

strategic choice approach for understanding media-movement interactions, which recognizes the importance of media framing of activists but also emphasizes that activists make decisions in light of current organizational and political realities (pp. 3-4).

ANARCHISM AND FRAMING

Framing theory represents a rich conceptual toolbox for examining issues such as: how the mass news media construct and promote dominant interpretations of reality; how these frames suppress activists, dissidents, and movements; how activists transform the mass media arena into a site of struggle; and how activists construct and promote their own narratives by tapping into cultural resonances and exploiting the routines and logic of news media systems. Given the vast literature on these topics, now spanning decades, it is hardly surprising that activists use framing concepts to evaluate strategic and tactical proposals, or that scholars, activists, and other critics express concern over how social-political issues, activists, and movements are framed or depicted in coverage. Despite framing theory's strengths and obvious appeal, though, anarchism problematizes much of its received wisdom regarding activist participation in framing processes, strategic frames and state power, media depictions of political violence, and the relationship between framing theory and power structures.

Participation in Framing Processes

To begin, from an anarchist perspective framing theory inadequately addresses the problem of unequal participation in meaning making. This stems from researchers' tendency to anthropomorphize social movements, which leads them to gloss over ideological differences within movements and neglect the role that human agency plays

in constructing and promoting collective action frames. "Movement scholars often write about social movements as 'speaking,' 'framing,' 'interpreting,' 'acting,' and the like, that is, engaging in activities that only human beings are capable of doing. Social movements do not frame issues; their activists or other participants do the framing," writes Benford (1997, p. 418).

Within movements, groups, and organizations, certain voices wield more influence than others do in the construction of strategic frames and overarching master frames. Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993) argue that, because activists do not have automatic standing in the news media, journalists tend to treat activists as more or less credible according to their organizational strength, resources, professionalism, coordination, media sophistication, and objectives. In other words, activists' influence over framing processes is partly a function of how well they emulate establishment actors. Strategic framing approaches tend to favor movement celebrities, spokespersons, media savvy organizers, large nonprofits and foundations, and activists whose views are more moderate than radical (Gamson & Wolfsfeld 1993; Gitlin 1980; Martin 1998; Mendes 2011; Ryan 1991). This can be a significant disadvantage for marginalized groups such as women, people of color, immigrants, prisoners, gays and lesbians, transgendered people, political radicals, and others who historically have lacked social, economic, and political resources and power (Heider 2000; Mendes 2011; Zinn 1980/2003). This points to a catch-22: Framing theory suggests that marginalized groups stand to gain power by promoting their own frames, but it also implies that the relative success of strategic framing efforts depends on how much power those groups have in the first place.

The participation problem is especially concerning given that so many media-savvy activists are progressives and liberals connected to the non-profit industrial complex (NPIC), i.e., the "system of relationships between government, the owning

classes, foundations, and nonprofit social service and social justice organizations that results in the surveillance, control, derailment, and everyday management of political movements" (Rodriguez 2007, p. 21). Furthermore, due to differences in power, status, resources, cultural knowledge, education, race, and ethnicity, not all groups or activists can make effective use of the routinized templates of organization or repertoires of contention that define mainstream media activism. This is especially true of those who operate at the margins of society or outside the NPIC. For example, groups who lack economic power usually cannot afford to hire public relations firms or produce expensive press packets (Heider 2000, p. 58).

Rather than accept or encourage tactical and strategic implications that privilege the views of NPIC-affiliated activists and other, more moderate actors over marginalized and radical voices, an anarchist approach to strategic framing might seek to increase the number of diverse views involved in frame construction, divert resources from the NPIC to grassroots efforts operating on shoestring budgets, and provide underrepresented, marginalized groups with more opportunities and room to make strategic framing choices and engage in media activism.

Strategic Framing and the State

Another anarchist concern is that activists' strategic framing efforts can augment the power of state agencies and institutions. To take one example, zero tolerance laws and tough penalties for drunk driving are directly related to collaborative strategic framing efforts involving citizens groups such as Mothers Against Drunk Driving as well as federal, state, and local policymakers, who laid the blame for alcohol-related driving

deaths squarely on drunk drivers and embraced a law enforcement strategy to address this problem (McCarthy 1994). As McCarthy (1994) explains,

> [The] movement against drunk driving was only possible through the earlier efforts of federal, state, and local functionaries. It emerged without direct assistance from the state, but it could not have emerged when it did had the federal functionaries not worked so diligently and successfully in framing the issue and mobilizing a collectivity of diverse state advocates in support of it. Only with the movement's emergence, however, were the many state functionaries able to bring their framing of the issue to wide public attention through the mass media (p. 155).

Unlike the early 20th century national prohibition movement, which treated alcoholism as a public health problem that threatened commerce and liberty (Blocker 2006; Pegram 1998; Rumbarger 1989), the activist-sponsored anti-drunk driver frame adopts a law-and-order perspective that links alcohol consumption with criminal behavior. In doing so, the frame implicitly supports incareral policies that allow the state to penetrate people's lives; in addition to facing jail time, fines, and community service, people with DUI and DWI convictions often find it more difficult to secure jobs, education, scholarships, and other opportunities.

To take another example, over the past two decades, in the wake of several high profile mass shootings throughout the United States, activists in the gun control reform movement have engaged in strategic framing efforts to push for tighter federal restrictions on firearms. Mass shootings and other gun-related deaths and injuries are certainly a serious problem in this country, and research indicates that there is direct link between gun availability and homicides and suicides committed with firearms (Hemenway 2004; Hepburn & Hemenway 2004; Miller et al. 2006; Miller, Azrael, & Hemenway 2002; Miller & Hemenway 1999; 2001). More Americans now die by guns than cars, at a rate of over 30,000 fatalities a year, and Congress will not even allow the

Center for Disease Control to conduct research on this problem, because doing so would upset gun manufacturers (Diamond 2015). As Tom Diaz (1999) observes, firearms manufacturers "vigorously conceal information that most other U.S. industries routinely reveal. Indeed, the firearms industry is a business so secret that it makes the tobacco industry look like a model of transparency" (p. 5). Given the circumstances, it is easy to see why victims' family members, parents and teachers, and other activists push for tougher regulations on people's ability to own or purchase firearms.

However, this frame does not address deeper issues related to the causes and consequences of gun violence and firearms control in the United States. In particular, gun control laws both stigmatize and criminalize those who are most affected by gun violence— namely, those defined as mentally ill, people of color, and queer, gender nonconforming, and transsexual folk of color—without addressing the sources of violence against these communities (Arkles 2013; Covert 2013; Gourevitch 2015; Kaplan & Kerby 2013; Metzi & MacLeish 2015). Gabriel Arkles (2013) writes:

> Gun control laws are a mechanism of this criminalization. Rather than preventing violence, most existing and proposed gun control laws increase violence through creating more mechanisms for the search, arrest, prosecution, and incarceration of marginalized communities, particularly communities of color. Laws purportedly about reducing guns and gun violence serve to justify greater use of guns on the part of law enforcement and corrections officers to enforce those laws (p. 857).

And as political scientist Alex Gourevitch (2015) observes:

> It is perhaps counterintuitive to say so but gun control responses to mass killings – whether racially motivated or otherwise – are a deep mistake. The standard form of gun control means writing more criminal laws, creating new crimes, and therefore creating more criminals or more reasons for police to suspect people of crimes. More than that, it means creating yet more pretexts for a militarized police, full of racial and class prejudice, to overpolice.

Furthermore, as these observations hint at, the gun control frame overlooks police killings of civilians, especially of young black men, even though Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the United Nations' Human Rights Council have all criticized the United States for its police violence and racial discrimination (Amnesty 2015; Collins 1998; Sheriff 2015). This frame also emphasizes mental illness in shooters, which is rarely a factor, while failing to address how white supremacy, misogyny, and toxic masculinity motivate killers who perpetrate mass shootings (Chu 2015; Metzi & MacLeish 2015).

Rather than view gun violence as primarily a regulatory problem, an alternative collective action frame might treat it as a public health issue to be confronted in myriad ways, e.g., by promoting free access to mental and medical health care, racial justice, and true disarmament, that is, reducing widespread access to firearms but also disarming and demilitarizing the police, decreasing incarceration, keeping cops out of public schools and marginalized communities, and breaking up the military-prison-industrial complex (Alexander 2010; Arkles 2013; Balko 2013; Chu 2015; Williams 2015).* This framing would not only affirm radical values, but would also align with anarchism's position that state crimes can be eliminated by abolishing the state (Martin 1995).

Political Violence and Framing

A major area of concern is the manner in which the protest paradigm and collective action frames, in particular the nonviolence master frame which has been carried down from the civil rights movement, shape perceptions of political violence and

* Similarly, in response to law-and-order media frames which advocate drug criminalization and other prohibition policies that disproportionately impact people of color (Alexander 2010), radical activists could frame decriminalization and harm reduction efforts as an appropriate response to drug abuse and addiction.

influence activists' tactical options. Within the anarchist tradition, the use of violent tactics historically has been a complex issue. Not only do anarchists disagree on the role that violence plays in social struggles, but there is no general consensus on what constitutes violence (Anonymous1 1979/1990; Chan 2004; Epstein 2001; Gordon 2008; Martin 2008; Richards 1993; Schmidt & Van der Walt 2009; Wolff 1969).* Indeed, anarchists are even reluctant to describe actions as violent or use terms such as 'revolution', suggesting that anarchism's ideological ambivalence regarding political violence poses a "strategic paradox" (Chan 2004; Gordon 2008).

It was not always so: In the late 19th and early 20th century, Marxists, anarchists, and other radicals all assumed that revolution would be a bloody affair. Insurrectionary anarchists such as Johann Most and Alexander Berkman even held that "propaganda of the deed"—assassinations, terrorism, and other acts of political violence and criminality carried out against members of the ruling class—could foment social revolution (Berkman 1912/1999; Gordon 2008; Schmidt & Van der Walt 2009). After these movements dispersed in the early 20th century, though, the civil rights movement, which emerged in the 1950s, eschewed violent tactics, contributing to inspiring later social movements to do the same. According to Gordon (2008):

> It was only in the second half of the twentieth century that a principled commitment to non-violence came to the fore in the worldviews of progressive social movements. But this happened during a period where anarchism had already largely disappeared from the scene, and it was in its absence that civil rights and anti-war movements popularised the notion of non-violent action in public discourse, inspired by figures such as Mohandas K. Gandhi and Martin Luther King. Later, the movements at whose intersection anarchism reappeared were either squarely rooted in this new tradition of civil-rights pacifism – as in the case of the women's anti-nuclear movement – or focused on self-endangering

* These definitional disputes are well beyond the scope of this dissertation. For in-depth examination of anarchist thinking on violence, see Chan (2004) and Gordon (2008), pp. 78-108.

> tactics without too much attention to questions of violence – as in the case of direct-action environmental defence (pp. 80-81).

As a result, when anarchism reemerged with political inertia in the 1990s, it found itself in "an environment where a culture of non-violent radicalism had achieved a hegemonic status," which has weakened creative thinking on the issue (p. 81). Against this perceived hegemony, some anarchists and other radicals argue that pacifism—the belief that political violence of any kind is unjustifiable under any circumstances—is a pathological, counterrevolutionary philosophy (Churchill 1998; Gelderloos 2007; 2013; Ryan 1998). In response to critics and activists' arguments that violent tactics are unethical, many anarchists counter that whether activists should use violence is a tactical question, not a moral one; against claims that nonviolent tactics are proven to be effective, these anarchists contend that activists ought to embrace a diversity of tactics, "meaning effective combinations drawn from a full range of tactics that might lead to liberation from all components of this oppressive system: white supremacy, patriarchy, capitalism, and the state," according to Gelderloos (2007, p. 3). This is not to say, of course, that advocates of tactical diversity believe violent tactics are appropriate or necessary in every situation.

Moreover, there are limits on what violent tactics can realistically achieve (Gordon 2008); very few anarchists believe political conditions are ideal for violent revolution.* In any case, it is fair to say that even though anarchists remain divided on the subject of political violence, nevertheless anarchist argumentation, practice, and modern warfare have eroded the taboo on violent repertories of contention over the past two decades (Epstein 2001, p. 12; Gordon 2008, p. 86). Although most reject lethal actions such as bombings and assassinations, contemporary anarchists and other radical anti-

* Even so, the anarchist view of tactical diversity arguably is too broad, because it does not rule out *any* methods, including assassinations, land mines, or biological weapons. For discussion, see Martin (2008).

capitalists sometimes rely on nonlethal violent tactics at protests and demonstrations, such as property destruction and confrontations with police (Gelderloos 2007; 2013; Gordon 2008; Van Deusen & Massot 2010).

Because these actions, which directly challenge the nonviolence master frame, are covered by the mass media from the perspective of the protest paradigm—and perhaps more importantly, because deprecatory media coverage of violent social protest provokes intense debate among activists—the use of political violence raises important questions about its appropriateness and political consequences. Without arguing for or against the use of violent tactics, and while remaining agnostic on the question of what constitutes violence, it is useful to examine some of the issues at the heart of activist debate on this topic.

A major dispute among anarchists and other radical activists concerns whether violent tactics divert attention from the social issues that activists seek to address, or otherwise distract from their strategic framing efforts at protests and demonstrations. This is closely related to another concern, namely, whether violent tactics aid movement efforts to gain public support, attract new recruits, or raise consciousness. To take a notable example, during the 1999 anti-WTO protests in Seattle, which united over 70,000 alter-globalization activists in massive street demonstrations, a small contingent of anarchists—numbering perhaps a few hundred—clashed with police and destroyed commercial retail property while participating in "Black Blocs," i.e., ad hoc affinity groups made up of individuals who wear black clothing and masks in order to remain anonymous and show solidarity with one another. As a tactic, the Black Bloc allows activists to push protests into more militant directions, such as property destruction and street fighting with police, while protecting participants from being arrested, identified, and/or prosecuted (Active Transformation 2002; Albert 1999; Epstein 2001; Infoshop

2004; Van Deusen & Massot 2010).* After mass news media circulated images of activists smashing the windows of corporate storefronts in downtown Seattle, those who participated in Black Blocs defended their actions in communiques (Van Deusen & Massot 2010), arguing that "window smashing, and the police violence that it provoked, had brought the attention of the media and given the demonstration a prominence that it would not have otherwise had," according to Epstein (2001, p. 12).

Unconvinced by the anarchists' justification for property destruction, veteran activists criticized those who engaged in violence. Writing in *Z Magazine* shortly after the events, Michael Albert (1999) leveled several criticisms against these actions:

> The events in Seattle had, before any trashing occurred, already entirely hamstrung the WTO. … The addition of trashing had no positive effects. It did not win useful visibility that would otherwise have been absent. It did not enlarge the number of folks participating or empathizing with the demonstration. It did not cause more substantive information to be conveyed either in the mainstream or on the left. It did not respect much less enlarge democracy. What it did do, instead, was (a) divert attention from the real issues, (b) provide a pretext for repression which would otherwise have been unequivocally seen as crushing legitimate dissent, and (c) and arguably most important, cause many to feel that dissent is an unsympathetic undertaking in which instead of actors respecting one another, some, at least, feel that they have the right to undemocratically violate the intentions and desires of most others.

Other participants and observers proffered similar criticisms. For instance, in an open letter to the demonstrators, a group of movement veterans argued that those who engaged in property destruction possibly shut out opportunities for consciousness raising, destroyed their own credibility by displaying a lack of consciousness (such as a protestor who destroyed a Nike window while wearing Nike shoes), possibly "contributed to turn off average people from the crucial central message that these corporations are the real

* The origins of the Black Bloc can be traced to European autonomist social movements of the 1970s-1990s, in particular Germany's Autonome movement, who adopted militant tactics in order to create and defend free spaces (Katsiaficas 1997/2006; Van Deusen & Massot 2010).

vandals and violators," and "allowed the media to replace coverage of mass mobilization with fringe vandalism" (Campbell et al. 2002, pp. 192-193). Various left-progressive accounts of the "Battle of Seattle" have also sought to distance the anti-WTO protestors from expressions of anarchist militancy (e.g., Solnit & Solnit 2009; Thomas 2000).

This debate between defenders and opponents of political violence might be thought of as representing, on some level, a dispute over the significance of framing concepts. Even if they do not mention ideas such as media framing, activists who oppose political violence on public alienation grounds implicitly hitch their assessment of these tactics to the protest paradigm and nonviolence master frame, that is, a specific theoretical conception of news media performance, its likely effects on media audiences, and associated strategic implications. On the other side of this coin, activists who endorse or condone the use of violent tactics may be thought of as rejecting the basic precepts of the nonviolence master frame and the protest paradigm's implied political consequences. From this vantage point, it could be argued that those who base their tactical analyses in the protest paradigm take a dim view of activists' agency in framing processes, as well as of media audience members' ability to draw their own conclusions from news accounts of activism and social protest.

One possible alternative approach would be to modify theoretical conceptions by incorporating ideas such as audience reception theory and resistant reading, which stress that media audiences often receive and interpret media texts (information, messages, etc.) in counterintuitive ways, which their original communicators (in this case, journalists working in the mass news media) might not have intended, and which might even transcend prevailing cultural attitudes and beliefs (Fetterley 1978; Fiske 1987/2011; Hall

1980; Holub 1984/2003; Jauss 1982).* This approach, which recognizes that media audience members can actively engage with cultural texts and look past dominant interpretations of reality, values the autonomy/agency of activists and media audiences. It also moves beyond the protest paradigm's adversarial conception of news media to suggest how deprecatory news coverage of activists can possibly serve a strategic purpose. Psychological research indicates that there is value in random, unanticipated, or disruptive stimuli, because this can foster creative thinking (Schooler & Dougal 1999). Those who think about media-movement interactions along these lines might consider it valuable for activists to embrace disruptive resistance tactics and their status as deviant actors. In this view, disparaging news coverage of activist violence can, somewhat paradoxically, actually attract public support for a movement or draw more people to a cause. This is especially true when media audiences are already skeptical of how mass news media frame social-political information, events, and issues.†

This perspective is exemplified by Gelderloos (2007), for example, who suggests that mass media coverage of activist violence at the anti-WTO protests actually had positive political consequences:

> The official claim was that the violence of the protests demonized the entire movement…. In fact, the violence of Seattle intrigued and attracted more new people to the movement than were attracted by the tranquility of any subsequent mass mobilization. The corporate media did not—and never will—explain the motives of the activists, but the violence, the visible manifestation of passion and fury, of militant commitment in an otherwise absurd world, motivated thousands to do that research on their own (p. 57).

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* I thank Harry Cleaver for introducing me to these concepts and discussing their implications. Reception theory adds an important dimension to anarchist and autonomist conceptualizations of news media and popular culture, even if it is rarely discussed in these theoretical contexts.

† According to Gallup (2012; 2014b) data, in the United States, trust in mass news media has reached an all-time low while there has been a sharp uptick in the number of Americans who believe the mass media are too conservative.

Moreover, there is no reason in principle why mass media coverage of political violence must always be palatable to media audiences in order to advance a movement's goals. For instance, the Animal Liberation Front (ALF)—a clandestine, leaderless network of radicals who use direct action methods in order to protect the rights of nonhuman animals—arguably benefits from deprecatory media treatments, because even bad press coverage of acts of sabotage and violence committed by ALF activists advances the goal of animal liberation by contesting widespread cultural ignorance about animal suffering. When in August 2003 animal rights activists bombed the offices of the Chiron Corporation because of its ties to Huntingdon Life Sciences, a biomedical research company that tests on animals, the event was covered by over a hundred newspapers and reminded millions of Americans that not everyone condones vivisection (Dawn 2004).

Of course, even if political violence can attract media coverage that possibly benefits activists, this does not necessarily translate to heightened consciousness or other indicators of movement growth. Critics challenge "riot porn"— videos and photos of riots and confrontations between activists and police—on the grounds that these images merely fetishize political violence (Harvey 2009; Nomad 2013; Razsa 2014). Furthermore, because activist violence is typically met with state violence, an important issue to consider is the extent to which media depictions of violent tactics invite state repression, such as by heightening the risk of inciting police violence against activists involved in protests and demonstrations (e.g., Albert 1999; Epstein 2001; Harvey 2009). Defenders of tactical diversity do not appear to disagree with the critics on this point. However, they argue that the threat of repression is not a compelling reason to exclude violent tactics from the activist toolbox. Activist violence invites state repression, sure, but this is to be expected when issuing a violent challenge to the state. As Mike Ryan

(1998) asks, "Do we *really* believe that if we could devise a non-violent means of eliminating the state we would be allowed to proceed unhindered in carrying it out? The state is violent in its very nature" (p. 135; emphasis in original). It should be noted, too, that activists are not always responsible for inciting violence. During the anti-WTO protests, police began attacking demonstrators before Black Bloc participants began to act, and in fact, the first act of property destruction occurred when police fired a tear gas grenade through a store window (Active Transformation 2002, p. 188).

Over the past decade, following the demise of the anti-war and Occupy Wall Street movements, anarchists and other radicals have begun to question the usefulness of violent tactics such as Black Blocs and property destruction, as well as nonviolent tactics such as protests, press conferences, and sit-ins, because these have become stale, routinized behaviors for journalists, activists, media audiences, and the targets of social protest (e.g., Day 2005; Nomad 2013). However, most activists have avoided hard conversations about whether certain strategies and tactics remain relevant, and continue to rely on familiar or comfortable repertoires of contention, which now might be moribund. Even though the global protests against the impending U.S. invasion of Iraq in February 2003 were the largest in recorded human history, it is doubtful that these actions had any appreciable impact on U.S. policy. In fact, war planners likely viewed these actions as completely irrelevant, and within a few years, participation in the U.S. antiwar movement dropped off significantly. A two-year survey study of 5,398 antiwar activists in 24 different U.S. cities showed that the movement demobilized as Democrats, who had been motivated to join antiwar efforts by anti-Republican sentiment, withdrew from antiwar activity, putting their efforts into political campaigns (Heaney & Rojas 2011). Activist "summit-hopping"— journeying around the country, continent, or world in order to attend a series of mass demonstrations—has been criticized as an exclusionary, elitist

practice that fails to connect with local organizing efforts (Burns 2012; Day 2005; Pastor & LoPresti 2004). Critics also argue that Black Blocs and riot porn are divorced from real strategies for social change (e.g., Harvey 2009). Arguably radical anti-capitalists are in the midst of a tactical impasse (Anonymous2 2013; Nomad 2013).

A final concern related to media coverage of political violence is whether violent tactics are compatible with anarchism's ethical-political commitments and emphasis on prefigurative politics (Albert 1999; Gordon 2008; Martin 2008). Gordon (2008) summarizes the problem:

> Can violence ever be coherent with strategies that are an embryonic representation of an anarchist society? Unlike other revolutionary movements, anarchists explicitly distance themselves from the position that the end justifies the means. They cannot say that violence, on whatever level, would be justified because it helps achieve a free society. Rather, they believe that means and ends should always be of the same substance (pp. 97-98).

As a defender of strict nonviolence, Martin (2008) argues that nonviolent social protest can be organized openly, allowing for widespread participation in activism, including of women, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities, and that nonviolence is compatible with the goal of living in a society without organized violence. On the other hand, as Gordon (2008) observes, it can be argued by defenders of tactical diversity that "anarchist violence against the state is precisely prefigurative of anarchist social relations," because anarchists would expect people to defend themselves from attempts to reconstitute or impose social hierarchy (p. 99).

Framing's Inattention to Power

A notable strength of framing research is its ideational component, which values activists' goals and beliefs as they relate to collection action framing processes. However,

framing research may be criticized for overlooking the roles that ideology and powerful institutional actors play in shaping news media frames (Carragee & Roefs 2004; Oliver & Johnston 2000). Whereas early framing studies such as Gitlin's (1980) emerged from the critical research tradition and focused on how powerful social, political, and cultural influences shape frame construction processes, recent studies tended to move away from these roots. Reese (2007), for instance, laments that framing researchers will often "give an obligatory nod to the literature before proceeding to do whatever they were going to do in the first place," while graduate students he works with use framing theory simply as a hook for their content analyses (p. 151). Recognizing this limitation, some researchers have argued that critical theoretical concepts such as ideology, media hegemony, and political economy may serve as useful correctives to the neglect of power in framing research (Carragee & Roefs 2004; Oliver & Johnston 2000; Tedrow 2009; 2011; Woehrle, Coy, & Maney 2008).

DOMINANT IDEOLOGY AND MEDIA HEGEMONY

Do all power struggles reduce to acts of coercion and resistance, or can groups secure and maintain power without using force or violence to impose their will? The writings of Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, and Antonio Gramsci invite radicals to consider the role that ideology plays in power struggles, especially in Western democratic capitalist societies such as the United States, where outright coercion is generally considered unusual.* The term 'ideology' is a slippery, contested concept, infused with

* Radicals such as Chomsky argue that in democratic capitalist societies, mind management via propaganda and public relations replaces the social control function that violence serves in totalitarian countries. On the historical roots of this in the United States, see Alex Carey's (1997) important book, *Taking the Risk Out of Democracy*. Although Herman and Chomsky (1988/2002) do not cite Carey in *Manufacturing Consent*, the 2002 edition of their masterful work is dedicated to Carey and Herbert Schiller, two scholars who virtually pioneered the study of corporate propaganda. After Carey committed suicide in 1987, Chomsky and others

multiple, incompatible meanings due to its wide application in different texts related to philosophy, history, sociology, Marxism, feminism, race, politics, language, media, communications, and other fields of study (Eagleton 1991; Larrain 1979; Lull 2000; McLellan 1995; Rehman 2013; Thompson 1984; 1990).* For this reason, it is useful to begin by examining some important dimensions of the term as it appears in activist and critical scholarly discourse.

According to John Thompson (1990), a prominent theorist of ideology, conceptions of ideology are either neutral or critical. "Neutral conceptions are those which purport to characterize phenomena as ideology or ideological without implying that these phenomena are necessarily misleading, illusory or aligned with the interests of any particular group" (p. 53). Neutral conceptions may also be described as nonevaluative conceptions. According to philosopher Tommie Shelby (2003), "The *nonevaluative* use of 'ideology' is epistemically and morally neutral: it does not take a stand on whether one should accept or oppose a given ideology" (p.156; emphasis in original). Activists and scholars employ neutral/nonevaluative conceptions when they define ideology broadly to refer to the organized systems of beliefs, values, aspirations, and/or worldviews of specific individuals, groups, classes, or institutions. For instance, James Lull (2000) formulates a neutral conception of ideology:

> In the most general sense, ideology is organized thought – sets of values, orientations, and predispositions that are expressed through technologically mediated and interpersonal communication. Ideologies are internally coherent *ways of thinking*. They are points of view that may or may not be "true;" that is, ideologies are not necessarily grounded in historically or empirically verifiable fact. Ideologies may be tightly or loosely organized. Some are complex and well

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endeavored to bring his work to a wider audience. Nevertheless, Carey's work is still not widely known outside of (or even within) academic circles.

* Indeed, even within Marx's prodigious body of writing, the term 'ideology' takes on multiple meanings. For more, see Michèle Barrett's (1991) *The Politics of Truth: From Marx to Foucault*, Chapter 1.

> integrated; others endure. Some meet strong resistance; others have immediate and phenomenal impact (p. 13; emphasis in original).

In the neutral view, different political ideologies include fascism, nationalism, conservativism, liberalism, socialism, Marxism, anarchism, and so on. Religious and spiritual belief systems such as Christianity and Islam also represent ideologies, as do other internally coherent ways of thinking about different aspects of social reality, such as sexism, racism, patriotism, anthropocentrism, and technological determinism. Institutional actors may also be said to operate according to ideologies, such as corporatism or neoliberalism. These ideologies guide action by helping those who ascribe to these belief systems to explain and interpret the world. They make specific normative claims about the social order and people's roles therein. Ideologies prescribe how things should be, distinguish between right and wrong (as well as positive and negative, etc.), and provide bases for evaluating competing belief systems.

Critical conceptions of ideology, on the other hand, "are those which convey a negative, critical or pejorative sense. Unlike neutral conceptions, critical conceptions imply that the phenomena characterized as ideology or ideological are misleading, illusory, or one-sided; and the very characterization of phenomena as ideology carries with it an implicit criticism or condemnation of them," according to Thompson (1990, pp. 53-4). Critical conceptions may also be described as evaluative conceptions. "To claim that a particular belief system is ideological, in the evaluative sense, is to impute to the system of belief some negative characteristic(s) that provides a reason to reject it (or at least some significant part of it) in its present form," observes Shelby (2003, p. 157). Activists, dissidents, critical scholars, and others employ critical conceptions when they criticize, disparage, or condemn specific ideas or beliefs by labeling them as 'ideology' and/or 'ideological'. For instance, many leftists would label as ideological the belief that

poor folk could improve their lot by working harder, because this belief assumes a capitalist view of economic reality and a just social order.*

Thompson (1990) argues that neutral conceptions tend to overlook several problems related to the intersection of power and belief, which critical conceptions were formulated in order to draw attention to (e.g., Marx 1859/1970; Marx & Engels 1932/1970). It is troubling, but hardly surprising, that status quo defenders dismiss radical left views as ideological, with no apparent sense of irony. Even so, there are important difficulties associated with critical conceptions. A main one, as Terry Eagleton (1991) observes, is that "not every body of belief which people commonly term ideological is associated with a *dominant* political power" (p. 6; emphasis in original). For example, many activists and scholars find it useful to speak of socialist or feminist ideologies as distinct from capitalist or sexist ideologies. It is also worth mentioning that this dissertation employs a neutral conception of ideology in its examination of communications scholars' different research orientations. Neutral conceptions cannot be dispensed with simply because they create antinomies; indeed, these conceptions arguably reflect how the term 'ideology' most commonly is used.

Another difficulty associated with critical conceptions is that the object of criticism is not always entirely clear. Here Shelby (2003) offers clarification:

> [T]he charge of ideology … can be directed at symbolic representations that are embodied, not in the consciousness of individuals, but in discourse and cultural

* Nicholas Abercrombie, Stephen Hill, and Bryan Turner (1980) draw a similar distinction as Thompson (1990) and Shelby (2003): "It is widely agreed that the notion of 'ideology' has given rise to more analytical and conceptual difficulties than almost any other term in the social sciences. … One issue in particular has bedeviled theoretical debate, namely, whether to understand the term in a special or in a general sense. In the first sense, 'ideology' is taken to refer to distinctive kinds of belief which are produced by particular social structures. 'Ideology' understood in this sense typically refers to false beliefs, although there is considerable room for dispute as to the precise way in which they are false. … By contrast, to employ the term 'ideology' in the general sense means that it can refer to any set of beliefs regardless of its social causation or its truth or falsity" (p. 187).

> products, such as slogans, jokes, print media, film, theater, music, art, advertisements, television programming, web sites, and the like (p. 158).

For instance, media texts that invoke racist stereotypes—e.g., that blacks are athletes, criminals, or unintelligent—can be described as ideological in the critical sense (Bristor, Lee, & Hunt 1995; Ewen & Ewen 2008; Hall 1995; Shelby 2003).

Stuart Hall (1995) relates three important points about ideologies: First, "ideologies do not consist of isolated and separate concepts, but in the articulation of different elements into a distinctive set or chain of meanings" (p. 18). For instance, in liberal ideology, terms such as 'capitalism' and 'freedom' may be associated with individual liberty and the free market, whereas these terms take on very different meanings in radical left political ideologies such as Marxism or anarchism, which consider capitalism to be an unjust economic system and view the pursuit of freedom as a collective enterprise. Second, although individuals can make ideological assertions, "ideologies are not the product of individual consciousness or intention. Rather, we formulate our intentions within ideology" (p. 19; emphasis in original). Unlike frames, which people actively construct and promote, ideologies are formed collectively through unconscious processes. People speak through ideologies, which pre-date individuals and provide them the means to make sense of their social environments. "The transformation of ideologies is thus a collective process and practice, not an individual one," he writes (ibid.). Third, according to Hall, "ideologies 'work' by constructing for their subjects (individual and collective) positions of identification and knowledge which allow them to 'utter' ideological truths as if they were their authentic authors" (ibid.).

Despite the conceptual ambiguities associated with the term, for activists, dissidents, and scholars, ideology—in both its neutral/nonevaluative and critical/evaluative senses—is a foundational concept for understanding the power of

cultural and informational institutions such as schools, organized religion, the culture industries (music, cinema, television, etc.), and the mass news media. For activists and dissidents, an issue of particular significance is the perceived role of bourgeois ideology in defending the status quo and preserving dominant class relations. Below, I examine two accounts of mass media which develop this theme: the dominant ideology thesis and the media hegemony thesis.

Dominant Ideology Thesis

Critical conceptions of ideology can be traced to Marx and Engels, who argued that the bourgeoisie, i.e., society's ruling class, obscures capitalist oppression and masks its true intentions by producing and transmitting ideological phenomena, defined asymmetrically as those ideas, values, and aspirations which express the interests of the ruling class (Marx 1859/1970, p. 21; Marx & Engels 1932/1970; Thompson 1990). In a famous passage in their book *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels (1932/1970) write:

> The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationships which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance. The individuals composing the ruling class possess among other things consciousness, and therefore think. Insofar, therefore, as they rule as a class and determine the extent and compass of an epoch, it is self-evident that they do this in its whole range, hence among other things rule also as thinkers, as producers of ideas, and regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age: thus their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch (p. 64-65; emphasis in original).

This view of ideology lays the foundation for the dominant ideology thesis of mass media, which may be summarized as follows: There exists a set of beliefs, values, and aspirations which constitute a "dominant ideology" that reflects the interests of those who belong to society's ruling class, who stand to benefit from its influence. As members of the ruling class, those who own and control the mass media and culture industries manipulate media content, both overtly and subtly, in order to disseminate dominant ideology to the members of the working class. The propagation of dominant ideology creates widespread acceptance of capitalism and society's class structure among members of the working class—what Marxists refer to as false consciousness—which produces working class quiescence despite unfair and oppressive economic conditions. Because it inhibits the development of working class consciousness, the influence of dominant ideology is instrumental in reproducing class relations in capitalist society, as well as neutralizing anti-capitalist resistance (Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner 1980; Abercrombie & Turner 1978; Althusser 1965/2005; 1971/2008; Marx & Engels 1932/1970; Marcuse 1964/1991; Miliband 1969; Poulantzas 1973; Thompson 1990, pp. 85-97).

Even though Marx and Engels did not consider the ideological incorporation of the working class into capitalist society to be a serious issue, the dominant ideology thesis nevertheless has become a cornerstone of their followers' accounts of how social reproduction occurs in capitalist societies (Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner 1980, p 8). From a critical media studies perspective, the thesis is notable for several reasons: It theorizes about the adversarial role of mass media; it suggests that a process of massive indoctrination occurs in capitalist societies; it accounts for the conformist, conservative outlook of the mainstream press; and it challenges the pluralist assumption that the mass media provide a forum for ideologically diverse views (Miliband 1969). For these reasons and others, the dominant ideology thesis is a common analytical substructure in

Marxist analyses of social reproduction and the power of mass media (Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner 1980; Abercrombie & Turner 1978; Thompson 1990).

The French Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser (1971/2008) provides a well-known formulation of the dominant ideology thesis in his essay *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*. Althusser takes a structuralist view of society in which "the social whole is a totality of instances, relatively interdependent and relatively autonomous" (Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner 1980, p. 31). Focusing his attention on those institutions which, in his view, have considerable autonomy from society's economic base, he argues that one group of institutions constitute a (*Repressive) State Apparatus* (SA), which includes the government, the head of state, police, courts, prisons, and the military. According to Althusser (1971/2008), "The State is a 'machine' of repression, which enables the ruling classes … to ensure their domination over the working class, thus enabling the former to subject the latter to the process of surplus-value extortion (i.e. to capitalist exploitation)" (p. 11). Another group of institutions constitute *Ideological State Apparatuses* (ISAs) distinct from the SA. Unlike the SA, which Althusser treats as a single entity, there exists a plurality of ISAs, such as: the religious ISA, the educational ISA, the family ISA, the legal ISA, the political ISA, the trade union ISA, the communications ISA, and the cultural ISA (pp. 17-18). "What distinguishes the ISAs from the (Repressive) State Apparatus is the following basic difference: the Repressive State Apparatus functions 'by violence', whereas the Ideological State Apparatuses function 'by ideology'," writes Althusser (pp. 18-19). Each ISA is responsible for conveying different components of the dominant ideology. For example, the political ISA subjects individuals to the dominant political ideology (fascism, democracy etc.) while the mass media subject individuals to nationalism, chauvinism, liberalism, moralism, and so on. Althusser argues that the school represents the dominant ISA, but together, the

ISAs all provide the knowledge and ideological discipline necessary for members of the working class to reproduce the capitalist system. "All Ideological State Apparatuses, whatever they are, contribute to the same result: the reproduction of the relations of production, i.e. of capitalist relations of exploitation" (p. 28).*

In the standard, Marxist formulation of the dominant ideology thesis, which focuses primarily on social reproduction and cohesion under capitalism, dominant ideologies express dominant *class relations* (Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner 1980; Abercrombie & Turner 1978; Thompson 1990). An alternative formulation of the thesis, on the other hand, generalizes the concept of dominant ideology to refer to all of those prevailing, rarely questioned ideas, values, and aspirations related to a society's politics, economics, and culture. These ideologies shape prevailing social attitudes and set the parameters for acceptable thought within and between institutions such as government, courts, mass media, corporations, workplaces, unions, schools, churches, and families. As Lull (2000) writes, "*Selected ways of thinking are advocated through a variety of channels by those in society who have widespread political and economic power.* The ongoing manipulation of public information and imagery by society's power holders constructs a particular kind of ideology – a *dominant ideology* which helps sustain the material and cultural interests of its creators," (p. 14; emphasis in original). This articulation of the dominant ideology thesis moves beyond classical Marxism's focus on state-organized social reproduction by drawing attention to the influence of a wider array of society's power holders. It recognizes multiple realities of oppression, not just class

* The dominant ideology thesis is also a common theme in popular culture, including several works of dystopia fiction, such George Orwell's classic *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and John Carpenter's satirical science fiction film *They Live*, which can be seen as offering an Althusserian critique of the mass media ISA (Grant 2004, p. 16).

oppression, and allows activists and theorists to contrast dominant ideologies with oppositional ideologies such as socialism, anarchism, and feminism.

By way of illustration, consider the ideology of patriotism—defined as "loyalty, support, service, and devotion to one's country" (Woehrle, Coy, & Maney 2008, p. 53)—which exerts significant influence in the United States (Gallup 2013; 2014a; 2015). Patriotism entails a set of beliefs and values regarding appropriate political thought and behavior. It suggests that Americans should support and respect the nation's president, system of government, members of the armed forces, and national symbols such as the American flag. Moreover, to be patriotic is viewed as good or commendable; unpatriotic people are considered to be deviant, dangerous, selfish, or ungrateful. Although patriotic beliefs appear as commonsense to many Americans, they could be described as ideological according to a critical conception of ideology, because they mask unpleasant realities about U.S. leaders, icons, government policies, etc. According to a neutral view of ideology, we might say that patriotism's normative implications conflict with other ideologies. For instance, the slogan "support the troops" is an obvious dictum for patriotic citizens, but from a radical left-wing or anarchist perspective this assertion is naïve and possibly dangerous, because it discourages citizens from questioning government policy or the morality of war, while implicitly demanding that those who oppose war drop their opposition to this policy (Goldman 1917/1969, pp. 127-144; Jensen 2004, pp. 19-21).

Media Hegemony Thesis

Another important account of ideological influence comes from Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Communist and intensely creative Marxist theorist imprisoned for much of his

life by the fascist dictator Mussolini (Forgacs 1988; Gramsci 1971; Jones 2006; Lears 1985; Sassoon 1987). Like the dominant ideology thesis, Gramsci's theory of hegemony attempts to explain how members of the ruling class maintain a position of dominance without using force or violence to impose their will. According to Gramsci, the supremacy of a ruling class in any given society rests on both domination (i.e., forms of coercion institutionalized in the state) as well as intellectual and moral leadership. As Gramsci (1971) writes:

> [The] supremacy of a social group manifests itself in two ways, as "domination" and as "intellectual and moral leadership". A social group dominates antagonistic groups, which it tends to "liquidate", or to subjugate perhaps even by armed force; it leads kindred and allied groups. A social group can, and indeed must, already exercise "leadership" before winning governmental power (this indeed is one of the principal conditions for the winning of such power); it subsequently becomes dominant when it exercises power, but even if it holds it firmly in its grasp, it must continue to "lead" as well (pp. 57-58).

In Gramsci's view, it is not enough for ruling groups in a society to exercise control through state coercion and the means of production. Nor is it the case that ruling groups can maintain their position "merely by giving their domination an aura of moral authority through the creation and perpetuation of legitimating symbols" (Lears 1985, p. 569). In order to win and maintain power, ruling groups must also *secure the consent* of those they rule over. As Steve Jones (2006) explains:

> Rather than imposing their will, 'dominant' groups … within democratic societies generally govern with a good degree of consent from the people they rule, and the maintenance of that consent is dependent upon an incessant repositioning of the relationship between rulers and ruled. In order to maintain its authority, a ruling power must be sufficiently flexible to respond to new circumstances and to the changing wishes of those it rules. It must be able to reach into the minds and lives of its subordinates, exercising its power as what appears to be a free expression of their own interests and desires. In the process, the ruling coalition will have to take on at least some of the values of those it attempts to lead, thereby reshaping its own ideals and imperatives (pp. 3-4).

Thus, unlike the dominant ideology thesis, which treats ideological domination as essentially a static state of affairs, hegemony theory emphasizes that hegemony has a dynamic character and can never be established once-and-for-all (Eagleton 1991, p. 115; see also Williams 1977, pp. 108-114). According to hegemony theory, ruling groups secure consent by an indoctrination process based on ideological saturation of civil society, i.e., "the ensemble of educational, religious and associational institutions" (Femia 1981, p. 24). Ideas, attitudes, values, and images supportive of the status quo emanate from society's cultural and informational institutions—its schools, churches, political organizations, military, courts, media, and so on—which according to Lull (2000) constitute

> an interlocking system of information-distributing agencies and taken-for-granted communications practices that permeate every corner of social and cultural reality. … This inter-articulating, mutually reinforcing process of ideological influence is the essence of hegemony. Society's most entrenched and powerful institutions … fundamentally agree with each other. Hegemony therefore depends on widespread circulation and social acceptance of the dominant ideology (p. 50).

As Downing (2001) observes:

> The perspectives on the wider society generated in these institutions often produced, [Gramsci] proposed, an unquestioning view of the world that took the status quo as inevitable and ruling class power as founded on that class's unique, self-evident ability to run the nation successfully …. Thus, although the system was also powered by its economic mechanisms and shored up during political crises by the use of police, courts, jails, and ultimately the military …, mass hegemonic institutions such as those listed were, so to speak, its first line of defense, its outer ramparts (pp. 14-15).

Because hegemony theory holds that the transmission of ideological phenomena is a crucial means by which ruling groups secure and maintain their power, it is often conflated with the false consciousness of the dominant ideology thesis. Yet this treatment misses that hegemony unites "persuasion from above with consent from below," to quote Gitlin (1980, p.10).Whereas the dominant ideology thesis posits that ideological

phenomena serve to mask social reality, hegemony theory suggests that ruling groups endeavor to depict their view of a just social order *as preferable to alternative visions*. As Bob Jessop (1982) explains:

> [H]egemony involves the successful mobilisation and reproduction of the 'active consent' of dominated groups by the ruling class through their exercise of intellectual, moral, and political leadership. This should not be understood in terms of mere indoctrination or false consciousness – whether seen as the reflex of an economic base or as an arbitrary set of mystifying ideas. For the maintenance of hegemony involves taking systematic account of popular interest and demands, shifting position and making compromises on secondary issues to maintain support and alliances in an inherently unstable and fragile system of political relations (without, however, sacrificing essential interests), and organising this support for the attainment of national goals which serve the fundamental long-run interests of the dominant group (p. 148).

This has important implications. To begin, it means that people are not simply dupes or blind to alternatives. Although subaltern groups may come to see ruling class values, attitudes, and ideas as common sense, the process of ideological indoctrination is a negotiated one (Gramsci 1971; Jones 2006). More importantly, it also suggests that subaltern groups are *complicit* in hegemony. Following this line of thought, in fact, it is a mistake for theorists to treat hegemony as a purely ideological notion. As political scientist Adam Przeworski (1986) argues, Gramsci's account of hegemony indicates that material conditions provide a basis for ruling groups to establish hegemony, which raises the question: Under what material conditions can hegemony be sustained? By attempting to answer this, activists and revolutionaries can move from questions about the influence of ideological phenomena to questions concerning people's actual, material needs – food, shelter, safety, and so on. By focusing on the material conditions under which people will or will not consent to being ruled over, the notion of class compromise becomes essential to understanding how ruling groups exercise hegemonic power especially in the face of clear social injustice. One can assume that subaltern groups actually recognize alternative

visions of society, politics, economics, and culture, but that *they make a rational decision* to accept certain forms of domination, such as capitalist exploitation.

There are many reasons why subaltern groups may choose to do this: They might believe it is not possible to overthrow capitalism given current political conditions. They may consider it politically risky to pursue alternatives to capitalism, because doing so could threaten the material gains achieved from previous compromises staked out with the ruling class. Or they may decide they do not want to experience a decline in living standards of undetermined duration and intensity in a transition to socialism (pp. 133-169). In his ethnography of peasant resistance in Malaysia, James C. Scott (1985) raises a similar point: "Except for those comparatively rare moments when a political opening or a revolutionary situation creates new possibilities or revives old aspirations, an attitude of pragmatic resignation is likely to prevail" (p. 325). In any case, members of subaltern groups are not passive, empty receptacles for dominant ideological beliefs imposed by a ruling class (Hall 1980; Scott 1985; 1990; Willis 1977).*

Hegemony theory is flexible. Even though Marx and Engels (1932/1970), Gramsci (1971), and other writers working within the Marxist tradition examine ideology primarily in its relations to forms of power institutionalized in capitalism and the modern state (e.g., Althusser 1971/2008; Jessop 1982; Laclau 1979; Laclau & Mouffe 1985/2001; Lukács 1923/1971; Marcuse 1964/1991; Miliband 1969; Poulantzas 1973), scholars such as Downing (1996; 2001), Eagleton (1991), Gitlin (1980), and Raymond Williams (1977) propose diffuse conceptions of hegemony that attempt to transcend classical Marxism's base/superstructure approach. Owing to its flexibility, scholars and critics have applied Gramsci's theory of hegemony to research areas such as education (Borg, Buttigieg, &

* For more on this, see Adam Przeworski's (1986) *Capitalism and Social Democracy*, Chapter 4.

Mayo 2002; Coben 1998; Hill 2007; Mayo 1999; 2010; 2015), political science (Femia 1981; Jessop 1982; Laclau & Mouffe 1985/2001; Przeworski 1986; Sassoon 1987), international relations (Ayers 2008; Bieler & Morton 2004; Gill 1993; McNally & Schwarzmantel 2009), sociology (Burawoy 1979; 2003; Sallach 1974; Woehrle, Coy, & Maney 2008), and, of course, media (Altheide 1984; Downing 1996; 2001; Gitlin 1980).

Even though Gramsci wrote very little about media, "he has been widely perceived as offering a general framework for the analysis of culture and power within which the roles of media can readily be slotted and understood," observes Downing (1996, pp. 199-200). His notion of hegemony thus appears in critical and activist examinations of alternative media and media-movement interactions (e.g., Downing 2001; Gitlin 1980; Kaufman 2003), as well as scholarly books and articles on mass culture, the production of mass news media content, and the distribution of power in media framing (e.g., Altheide 1984; Carragee & Roefs 2004; Martín-Barbero 1993; Oliver & Johnston 2000; Rachlin 1988; Sallach 1974; Shoemaker and Reese 1996). Extending the concept of hegemony to the realm of mass media, the media hegemony thesis suggests that the mass media are directly implicated in the continuation and maintenance of power structures (capitalism, the state, white supremacy, patriarchy, and so on).

According to Lull (2000), ideologies have persuasive force only when ideas can be represented and communicated, in particular through the culture industries and mass media (p. 14-15). The concepts of hegemony and dominant ideology thus take on special importance in societies where the circulation of symbolic phenomena increasingly is mediated by the institutions of conglomerated, corporate mass media. Because they reach large audiences while disabling widespread participation in meaning making, the mass news media are considered to be crucial actors in the production and transmission of

ruling class ideologies within advanced capitalist societies (Gitlin 1980; Hall 1995; Herman & Chomsky 1988/2002; Lull 2000; Thompson 1990; Woehrle, Coy, & Maney 2008). According to Hall (1995),

> In modern societies, the different media are especially important sites for the production, reproduction and transformation of ideologies. Ideologies are, of course, worked on in many places in society, and not only in the head…. But institutions like the media are peculiarly central to the matter since they are, by definition, part of the dominant means of ideological production. What they "produce" is, precisely, representations of the social world, images, descriptions, explanations and frames for understanding how the world is and why it works and is said and shown to work (pp. 19-20).

And as Gitlin (1980) observes:

> The media bring a manufactured public world into private space. From within their private crevices, people find themselves relying on the media for concepts, for images of their heroes, for guiding information, for emotional charges, for a recognition of public values, for symbols in general, even for language. Of all the institutions of daily life, the media specialize in orchestrating everyday consciousness—by virtue of their pervasiveness, their accessibility, their centralized symbolic capacity. They name the world's parts, they certify reality *as* reality—and when their certifications are doubted and opposed, as they surely are, it is those same certifications that limit the terms of effective opposition. To put it simply, the mass media have become core systems for the distribution of ideology (pp. 1-2; emphasis in original).

This is made possible by the fact that control over media and communications systems rests in the hands of relatively few elite actors, i.e., those who own and control the culture industries and the institutions of the mass media, which promulgate ruling groups' ideology via media texts and images in concert with one another (Altheide 1984; Herman & Chomsky 1988/2002; Lull 2000; Sallach 1974). As Lull (2000) explains, "In Gramsci's time and continuing today, owners and managers of media industries are able to produce and reproduce ideological content, inflections, and tones far more easily than other people in society because the elites manage the key socializing institutions, thereby

guaranteeing that their points of view are constantly and attractively cast into the public arena" (p. 50).

Hegemony acts as a linking mechanism between dominant ideology and people's consciousness (ibid., p. 48). This linkage occurs when media makers "encode" hegemonic ideas and messages into media content, which audiences then "decode," or interpret, and incorporate into their own understandings (Hall 1980). Thus, the media hegemony thesis posits that journalists themselves are among the main conduits for the dissemination of dominant ideology. Reporters and editors often view themselves as independent, objective observers, but in actual practice their beliefs, socialization, habits, and work routines are replete with dominant ideology, which become encoded in media texts and decoded by audience members. Moreover, before they become journalists, they pass through and are socialized by those institutions of ideology aforementioned. According to Altheide (1984), the media hegemony thesis entails three assumptions about journalists' behavior: (1) the socialization of journalists involves guidelines, routines, and orientations replete with dominant ideology; (2) journalists tend to cover topics and present stories which are conservative and supportive of the status quo; and (3) journalists tend to present pro-American and negative coverage of foreign countries (p. 478). As a result, journalists unwittingly promote ideological hegemony by generating news coverage supportive of the status quo and its interpretations of social, political, and economic issues (Altheide 1984; Fishman 1980; Gitlin 1980; Rachlin 1988).

For this reason, media hegemony is associated with the concept of media framing (Carragee & Roefs 2004; Gitlin 1980). Like framing theory, hegemony theorists acknowledge the important role that culture plays in constructing different visions of social reality. According to sociologists Lynn Woehrle, Patrick Coy, and Gregory Maney (2008), hegemonic processes occur in the context of a *dominant symbolic repertoire*,

which they define as "cultural resonances that occupy a particularly privileged position due to their frequent invocation by powerholders and by many others, and due to their widespread acceptance by the general public" (p. 29).

Other important issues related to media hegemony, which coincide with concerns identified by political economists of mass news media, include media globalization and cultural imperialism. Powerful media corporations easily cross national borders, raising concerns about whether these companies encroach upon local cultures and customs, while eroding other peoples' sovereignty (e.g., Innis 1950/1972; Lull 2000; Schiller 1969/1992; Smythe 1981; Thussu 1998; Tomlinson 1991). These and other topics unfortunately fall outside the scope of this study.

THE TWO THESES' IMPLICATIONS FOR STRATEGY

Prima facie, the dominant ideology thesis and the media hegemony thesis are very similar: Both have distinctly Marxist origins, in that they assume class relations in capitalist societies are inherently unstable. Both posit that capitalism's inherent instability motivates ruling groups to transmit ideological phenomena via the mass media and other informational/cultural institutions, in order to reproduce the capitalist social order and thereby preserve a position of dominance. And both point to working class quiescence as a consequence of the dissemination of ruling class ideology (Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner 1980; Abercrombie & Turner 1978; Thompson 1990). Indeed, for these reasons and others, scholars tend to treat Gramsci's (1971) theory of hegemony as a version of the dominant ideology thesis, especially since "Gramsci's conceptions of hegemony, and of ideology as cementing and unifying, are important in that he has, probably more than any

other theorist, contributed to the contemporary dominant ideology thesis" (Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner 1980, p. 14).

However, I have purposefully sketched these two perspectives in such a way to draw attention to important differences between them: First, the dominant ideology thesis holds that ruling class ideology obscures, mystifies, or masks objective reality, which assumes that there is a "true" version of reality which people could access if only their perceptions were not clouded. The media hegemony thesis does not share this epistemic commitment to an objective reality by making assumptions about the truth or falsity of ideological phenomena. The difference in epistemic commitments is directly related to the theses' different analytical focuses, and how each views the purpose of ideological phenomena. Ideologies are tautologically false according to the dominant ideology thesis, because their purpose is to obscure objective reality. According to the media hegemony thesis, the truth or falsity of ideological phenomena is not a central concern, so long as they secure consent. As Eagleton (1991) observes, "Gramsci is an historicist Marxist who believes that truth is historically variable, relative to the consciousness of the most progressive social class of a particular epoch" (p. 121).

Second, the dominant ideology thesis and the media hegemony thesis take very different views of media audiences. Simply put, the dominant ideology thesis asserts that people are duped into holding a false view of reality. Hegemony theory, on the other hand, stresses the role of an active audience, which is complicit in its indoctrination (Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner 1980; Abercrombie & Turner 1978; Gramsci 1971; Jones 2006; Thompson 1990). As Steve Jones (2006) observes, "Hegemony is a more sensitive and therefore useful critical term than 'domination', which fails to acknowledge the active role of subordinate people in the operation of power" (p. 41).

Third, even though both theses represent accounts of state-organized and ideologically secured social reproduction (Thompson 1990, p. 86), the theory of hegemony is more nuanced in that it contains an important political analysis concerning how members of the ruling class maintain a position of dominance by constantly reassessing and repositioning themselves vis-à-vis subaltern groups. To quote Eagleton (1991), "As a concept … hegemony is inseparable from overtones of struggle, as ideology perhaps is not. … [Hegemony offers] a signal advance on some of the more ossified, scholastic definitions of ideology to be found in certain 'vulgar' currents of Marxism" (p. 115). Due to their divergent political emphases, the two theses have different strategic implications for activists and movements; moreover, it seems likely that theorists' inattention to strategic implications helps to explain why these perspectives are conflated in the first place.

Impenetrable Ideology

The dominant ideology thesis carries two main strategic implications. The first one is not comforting, but bears mentioning. Taken to their logical conclusion, certain strong formulations of the thesis view ideological domination as so pervasive, and ruling class power as so entrenched, that resistance is exceedingly difficult, if not impossible. For instance, in Althusser's (1971/2008) account of ideology, people can never hope to stand outside of, let alone mount a challenge to, the ISAs' dominant ideological influence. As Paul Willis (1977) observes:

> Structuralist theories of reproduction [such as Althusser's] present the dominant ideology (under which culture is assumed) as impenetrable. Everything fits too neatly. Ideology always pre-exists and pre-empts any authentic criticism. There are no cracks in the billiard ball smoothness of process. All specific contradictions

> and conflicts are smoothed away in the universal reproductive functions of ideology (p. 175).

The strategic implication of Althusser's cynical view, if it could be called strategic, is that one should simply accept the influence of pervasive ruling class ideology; at best, opponents of the status quo can take solace in the fact that they are clever enough to realize the futility of attempting to challenge the influence of dominant ideology.

Ideology-Critique

For proponents of the dominant ideology thesis who do believe there are paths of resistance, the second main strategic implication is that activists and revolutionaries should tear down bourgeois mystifications and unmask ideological phenomena by engaging in the critique of ideologies, or what Marx referred to as ideology-critique (e.g., Lichtman 1993; Marx and Engels 1932/1970; Shelby 2003). Although this technique is viewed by many social scientists as too politically loaded, obsolete, and passé to be of any use, "ideology-critique is indispensable for understanding and resisting the forms of oppression that are characteristic of the modern world," according to Shelby (2003, p. 154). However, there are important difficulties associated with its use. First, it is by no means obvious how ideology-critique translates to resistance; whatever repertoires of contention might be associated with ideology-critique remain underspecified. A second difficulty, as noted above, is that the dominant ideology thesis assumes there is an objective reality, which people can access once their ideological blinders have been removed. Not only is this far from obvious, but there is a tacit suggestion here, rooted in Marx's understanding of capitalism as a system characterized by intense class conflict, that once false consciousness has been lifted and people discover the truth about capitalist oppression, this will somehow lift the floodgates of revolutionary sentiment. As

Przeworski (1986) and Scott's (1985) arguments suggest, this assumption is questionable, to say the least, given that people can have perfectly valid, rational reasons for not wanting to commit themselves to anti-capitalist struggle.

Challenging and Harnessing Hegemony

On the whole, the media hegemony thesis's implications for activist strategy are much more compelling. The concept of hegemony assumes a neutral view of ideology wherein there are multiple, competing interpretations of "how things are" in society and the world. Ruling groups, by virtue of their entrenched political, economic, and cultural power, enjoy unparalleled access to society's cultural and informational institutions, which gives them disproportionate control over language and political discourse within society, as well as the ability to transmit their preferred ideologies. At the same time, hegemony theory stresses that because capitalism is an inherently unstable system, hegemony is never complete or definite; since ruling groups depend on the consent of those they rule over, they must constantly adapt to shifting popular attitudes and changes in social-political, economic, and cultural conditions (Gramsci 1971; Jones 2006). Hegemony theory thus suggests that media and discourse become important terrains of struggle between powerholders and movements, as well as tools of resistance for activists and social movements (Downing 1996; 2001; Gitlin 1980; Woehrle, Coy, & Maney 2008).

As a Leninist, Gramsci (1971) argued that ruling class ideological hegemony could only be broken by a mass political party, i.e., the Communist Party, organized by a revolutionary vanguard of organic intellectuals, i.e., working class intellectuals who naturally obtain positions of leadership in the course of struggle. Gramsci urged

revolutionaries to form counter-hegemonic blocs, composed of subalterns and their allies, which could undermine consent and ruling class ideology by promoting alternative, socialist visions of economic, political, and social organization. After waging a protracted "war of position," meaning an intellectual and cultural struggle against ruling class hegemony, revolutionaries could shore up enough popular support to launch a "war of manouvre," meaning a physical confrontation with the ruling class. If victorious, the revolutionary socialists would attain state power and impose a new hegemony (Day 2005; Downing 2001, pp. 14-17; Gramsci 1971; Jones 2006).

In a more general sense, though, hegemony theory suggests that activists and movements can challenge elite control over discourse while engaging the non-activist public in the process. In order to contest the entrenched power of ruling groups, activists must create *oppositional knowledge*, or a body of social meanings that challenge dominant ideological conceptions. According Woehrle, Coy, and Maney (2008),

> Oppositional knowledge questions what is considered possible and what is considered impossible, what is considered desirable and what is considered undesirable. It injects criticism of assumed limits and it also provides a vision for what is outside 'normal' practices. It becomes both the basis and expression of a counter-culture (p. 8).

The authors use the example of patriotism to illustrate their point. After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the concept of "patriotism" became associated with a willingness to use preemptive violence to defend the United States. Anti-war groups that chose, instead, to link patriotism with peace and democracy produced a kind of oppositional definition of citizenship, i.e., a type of oppositional knowledge (ibid.). Woehrle, Coy, and Maney specify four types of oppositional knowledge:

- *Counter-informative knowledge* aims to present information that is "missing from the picture," in order to "widen the discussion and possibly change the political

assessment people make or the outcomes they desire" (p. 9). For instance, peace activists may question war policies by arguing that the amount of money the federal government spends annually on defense dwarfs what it spends on social programs.

- *Critical-interpretative knowledge* "assesses the information that has been provided as accurate, but questions the moral or social basis for how that information is present, interpreted, or used" (ibid.). Rather than present counter-informative information, critical-interpretative knowledge articulates a different meaning of the information presented. For instance, peace activists may agree that the purpose of U.S. military interventions abroad is to promote democracy in foreign countries, but they might also question whether this is an ethically appropriate means of doing so (pp. 15-16).
- *Radical-envisioning knowledge* builds on the understandings exposed by counter-informative and critical-interpretative knowledge in order to envision or raise "what alternatives could and should look like if they are instituted" (p. 10). For instance, peace activists may articulate a conception of democracy which advocates for broad political participation (p. 18).
- *Transformative knowledge* "defines specific ways to achieve the alternatives that are envisioned by the movement" (p. 10). For example, peace activists may urge people to engage in forms of political activism that hold leaders accountable and challenge U.S. foreign policy (pp. 18-19).

Woehrle, Coy, and Maney argue that oppositional knowledge allows activists either to *challenge* hegemony or to *harness* hegemony. In both cases, the dominant symbolic repertoire predetermines the nature of activist argumentation and discourse:

> The cultural resources that make up the dominant symbolic repertoire perform a constraining role insofar as it is difficult to and sometimes unwise for challenging movements to attempt to operate completely outside of the dominant symbolic repertoire. To do so may compromise the cultural resonance of the movement's messages. On the other hand, challenging movements are far from completely constrained by the dominant symbolic repertoire, since it always remains available for appropriation and is vulnerable to challenges. They can reinterpret and refashion the meanings of elements in the dominant symbolic repertoire, thereby contributing so substantive cultural change in the process (p. 29).

This connects with Ryan's (1991) insight that activists draw from a wide reservoir of cultural resonances in the process of constructing and promoting collective action frames. Like framing theory, the media hegemony thesis suggests that activists should engage with the institutions of mass news media in order to promote oppositional knowledge which challenges and/or harnesses hegemonic ideology (Gitlin 1980; Woehrle, Coy, & Maney 2008).

Hegemony and Framing

An important strategic implication of the media hegemony thesis, then, is that activists and social movement organizations can challenge ruling class ideological hegemony by engaging in strategic framing efforts that promote ideas, values, and messages—counterhegemonic ideologies, in other words—which contradict the dominant symbolic repertoire. For example, peace activists may challenge the taken-for-granted, hegemonic belief that the United States is the world's greatest democracy, by arguing that the U.S. political system is marred by corruption and voter apathy. "Antiwar framing like this that challenges hegemony counters not only specific prowar framing but also broader ideas from the dominant symbolic repertoire … that give these frames their potency," according to Woehrle, Coy, and Maney (2008, p. 32). Of course, activists can do more than simply challenge hegemonic ideas. Because discourse is multivocal and open to

multiple meanings and interpretations, another strategic implication is that activists and movements can harness ruling class ideological hegemony by engaging in strategic framing efforts which draw from the dominant symbolic repertoire in order to fashion alternative meanings (p. 34). For example, peace activists draw from cultural resonances in order to reconstruct the idea of patriotism in such a way that the concept serves the anti-war movement's strategic ends (pp. 41-67).

In addition to engaging with mass media institutions, the media hegemony thesis implies that activists should create their own forms of activist/alternative media. For instance, Downing (2001) argues that radical alternative media play important roles as counter-hegemonic forces. In this view, activist media makers are analogous to the organic intellectuals who lead a war of position. "A proliferation of such media would be vital, both to help generate those alternatives in public debate and also to limit any tendency for oppositional leadership, whatever forms it took, to entrench itself as an agency of domination rather than freedom" (p. 15). Radical media also fill the void, according to Downing, in those everyday scenarios where dominant ideologies lead mainstream journalists to engage in acts of self-censorship. "Radical media in those scenarios have a mission not only to provide facts to a public denied them, but to explore fresh ways of developing a questioning perspective on the hegemonic process and increasing the public's sense of confidence in its power to engineer constructive change" (p. 16).

ANARCHISM, DOMINANT IDEOLOGY, AND MEDIA HEGEMONY

Several terms, concepts, and arguments associated with the dominant ideology and media hegemony theses not only undergird critical and radical scholarship of news

media (e.g., Downing 2001; Gitlin 1980; Herman & Chomsky 1988/2002; Ryan 1991), but have also become leftist parlance. This is especially true in Marxist-Leninist circles, where terms such as '(dominant) ideology', 'false consciousness', 'hegemony', 'counterhegemonic', and so on continue to be common currency in intramovement discourse and organizing materials, such as websites, books, newspapers, and pamphlets. It is unsurprising, then, that activists and dissidents often find these theoretical accounts to be useful, appealing, or intuitive ways to talk about the power of mass media, even if they do not explicitly evoke Gramsci or Marx in their analyses. Nevertheless, anarchism, autonomist Marxism, and academic scholarship on ideology problematize these theoretical perspectives.

Empirical and Theoretical Validity

Ideology is an indistinct, immaterial concept, and it is far from obvious that a ruling class ideology really exists, that its content can be isolated or analyzed, or that it actually exerts the strong influence attributed to it by the dominant ideology and media hegemony theses (Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner 1980; Abercrombie & Turner 1978; Scott 1985; Willis 1977). In a groundbreaking critique, sociologists Nicholas Abercrombie, Stephen Hill, and Brian Turner (1980) argue that the contention that there is a dominant or hegemonic ideology, which serves to create acceptance of capitalism and incorporate lower classes into the social order, is empirically false and theoretically unwarranted. They establish this by constructing case studies of feudalism, early capitalism, and late capitalism in British society. Although there were ruling class ideologies in feudalist and early capitalist settings, these served mainly to reinforce the social cohesion of the

dominant class itself; these ideologies had a negligible influence on members of the lower class, however, because the mechanisms of transmission were underdeveloped.

In late capitalism, a different situation obtains: Because powerful corporations rather than wealthy families now own and control the economy, insofar as a ruling class ideology can be said to exist, it is ill-defined, internally incoherent, and not shared by members of dominant groups, i.e., its supposed proponents (pp. 128-140). This critique dovetails with Fred Block's (1977) argument that the idea of a class-conscious ruling group must be rejected in order to understand how contemporary capitalism actually operates: Capitalists act on the basis of a self-interested, profit-maximizing rationality, which often puts them in conflict with state managers, who act on the basis of protecting capitalism's long-term interests. The "ruling class does not rule," or at least it does not do so in the sense that proponents of the dominant ideology and media hegemony theses typically assert it does, i.e., as a more-or-less ideologically unified group.

Furthermore, despite the advent of well-developed mechanisms for the transmission of dominant ideology in late capitalist societies, such as mass education and mass media institutions, the influence of dominant/hegemonic ideology in shaping subordinate beliefs is greatly exaggerated. Against the view that mass media secure adherence of the working class to the social order by promulgating dominant ideology, Abercrombie, Hill, and Turner (1980) observe that "The evidence of media influence is so thin and subject to so many caveats that our conclusion must be that the media are not significant except in the most isolated instances" (p. 152). This jives with over a half century's worth of mass communications research casting serious doubt on models of communication which hold that the mass media directly influence media audiences. The mass media often *do* exert a strong influence on audience members' beliefs and

behaviors, but they do not unproblematically transmit ruling class ideologies (Klapper 1960; Lowery & De Fleur 1983; McCombs 2004; Severin & Tankard 2001).

In addition, observe mass communications scholars Werner Severin and James Tankard (2001), "The idea of media hegemony is a difficult one to test with research. Although suggesting a powerful influence, it is somewhat vague in its actual implications. If it is true, it is describing such a pervasive phenomenon that it becomes difficult to study because it is nearly impossible to set up a control group that is not subject to the effect being researched" (p. 282). Media hegemony research also treats hegemony as both an attribute and effect of late capitalist social orders, "which creates a methodological challenge to empirically assess claims made by researchers," according to Altheide (1984, p. 479).

Social Reproduction and Class Reductionism

The dominant ideology and media hegemony theses are examples of what Thompson (1990) refers to as the consensual theory of social reproduction, according to which "the ongoing reproduction of social relations depends in part on the existence of values and beliefs which are collectively shared by individuals, and which thereby bind individuals to the social order" (p. 87). However, ideological incorporation is not necessary to bind people to the capitalist social order, and in fact cynicism and hostility toward dominant values can sometimes coincide with social reproduction (p. 90). For example, in his classic study *Learning to Labor*, Willis (1977) shows how youth resistance to public schooling paradoxically inculcates ideas, values, and attitudes that prepare rebellious teens for working class jobs later on in life. Thus, observes Thompson (1990), "The prevalence of sceptical and cynical attitudes, and the rejection of values and

beliefs propagated by the principal agencies of socialization, do not necessarily represent a challenge to the social order" (p. 90).

In addition, argues Thompson, theoretical accounts of state-organized and ideologically secured social reproduction such as Althusser's (1971/2008) take a troubled view of the role of the state: First, these accounts assume a class-reductionist approach to the modern state, which sees the state primarily as an institution through which ruling class power is exercised. The problem with this view is that it oversimplifies the role and historical development of the modern state, which cannot be understood exclusively in terms of class relations (Thompson 1990, pp. 92-93). It also assumes that the ruling class works in its long-term interests, which is not always the case (Block 1977). As Thompson (1990) observes, the state does more than simply solidify class rule:

> It is no doubt the case that some aspects and activities of the state can be understood in terms of the long-term interests of the dominant class, but it could hardly be maintained that state institutions are unresponsive to the demands of other classes and major interest groups, nor could it be plausibly argued that *all* aspects and activities of the modern state, including some of the most important aspects, can be analysed in terms of class interests and class relations (p. 93; emphasis in original).

Second, argues Thompson, the very idea of ruling class ideology takes a class-reductionist view of ideology, which tends to overvalue the importance of class. By relativizing dominant/hegemonic ideology and its analysis to class relations, the dominant ideology and media hegemony theses marginalize other types of domination and their associated symbolic phenomena (pp. 94-95). Of course, as noted above, some articulations of the dominant ideology and media hegemony theses try to avoid this by proposing more diffuse conceptions of dominant/hegemonic ideology, which recognize multiple realities of oppression (e.g., Downing 2001; Eagleton 1991; Gitlin 1980;

Williams 1977). Nevertheless, this class reductionism is a common problem in dominant ideology and media hegemony accounts.

Third, while accounts of state-organized and ideologically secured social reproduction draw attention to mass news media institutions, they do not treat the mass media as seriously as they should. Again, quoting Thompson (1990):

> The institutions of mass communication are treated in a relatively peripheral way, as some among a broad range of ideological state apparatuses; but this perspective fails to do justice to the mediazation of modern culture and, in general, to the centrality of mass communication in modern social and political life. … The media of mass communication are not simply one among several mechanisms for the inculcation of a dominant ideology; rather, these media are partially constitutive of the very forum within which political activities take place in modern societies, the forum within which, and to some extent with regard to which, individuals act and react in exercising power and in responding to the exercise of power by others (p. 95).

The concerns raised by issues of empirical validity and class reductionism motivate scholars to pursue alternative conceptions of ideology (e.g., Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner 1980; Thompson 1990). For example, Thompson's (1990) account of ideology offers an important alternative to Marxist formulations. Eschewing neutral conceptions, he defines ideological phenomena as symbolic forms that *establish* and *sustain* relations of domination: "to establish, in the sense that meaning may actively create and institute relations of domination; to sustain, in the sense that meaning may serve to maintain and reproduce relations of domination through the ongoing process of producing and receiving symbolic forms" (p. 58). According to Thompson's definition, ideological phenomena may include, for example, symbolic forms that compound oppression by depicting capitalism as morally superior to other economic systems, whites as superior to people of color, or men as superior to women.

Unlike neutral conceptions, which treat ideology as simply an aspect of social life or inquiry present in any political program, Thompson's formulation captures some of the term's intent as it appears in the writings of Marx and Engels. Because Thompson proffers an asymmetrical definition of ideology, he does not speak of ideologies that counter dominant ideologies, e.g., of socialist ideology as distinct from capitalist ideology, but rather of *contestatory symbolic forms* "which may help to highlight … those symbolic forms which serve to establish and sustain relations of domination" (p. 68).

However, Thompson's formulation differs from the classical Marxist treatment of ideology in three important ways. First, unlike the dominant ideological thesis, he is unconcerned with the truth or falsity (i.e., the illusory character) of ideological phenomena (pp. 56-57). Second, Marxist accounts conceptualize ideology mainly in terms of dominant/subordinate class relations, whereas Thompson's formulation considers a wide range of ideological phenomena, which includes class relations, but also "other kinds of domination, such as the structured social relations between men and women, between one ethnic group and another, or between hegemonic nation-states and those nation-states located on the margins of global power" (p. 58). Third, his account draws attention to how ideological forms are *partially constitutive* of social reality: "Symbolic forms are not merely representations which serve to articulate or obscure social relations or interests which are constituted fundamentally and essentially at a pre-symbolic level; rather, symbolic forms are continuously and creatively implicated in the constitution of social relations as such" (ibid.). Thompson's account captures an important aspect of why ideology matters to critical and radical analysts of news media. Because his conception of ideology treats power broadly, focuses on meaning in the service of power (i.e., a corruption of information power), and draws attention to the

significance of mass media institutions, it has important strengths from an anarchist perspective.

Inability to Theorize Resistance

The critiques proffered so far of the dominant ideology and media hegemony theses are compatible with anarchism's rejection of Marxist economism and of state-centric theoretical perspectives. A final objection is that, by focusing mainly on the ability of the ruling class to influence, indoctrinate, and incorporate subordinate groups, these two theses cast members of the working class and other subaltern groups in the role of passive victims. Against this one-sided view of class conflict, anarchism and autonomist Marxism emphasize that ruling groups must constantly adapt to pressures from the working class and/or subaltern groups, who are not passive victims, but rather are unruly subjects who actively fight back against forms of oppression and resist being integrated into capitalist society (Cleaver 1979; Gordon 2008; Guérin 1970; Negri 1984/1991; Scott 1985; 1990; 2009; Zinn 1980/2003). From an anarchist/autonomist perspective, the dominant ideology and media hegemony theses are inherently defeatist perspectives that reflect an inability to theorize about the possibilities for resistance to forms of oppression institutionalized in capitalism and the state (the dominant ideology thesis obviously more so than the media hegemony thesis). As Harry Cleaver (1979) observes:

> The flaw that lies at the very heart of Critical Theory's concept of bourgeois cultural hegemony … is its total one-sidedness. The positing of cultural hegemony, like that of an all-powerful technological rationality, reflects the inability to recognize or theorize the growth of any working-class power capable of threatening the system (p. 40).

Cleaver's comment above refers mainly to the work of Herbert Marcuse (1964/1991) and other members of the Frankfurt School, but his insight applies to Gramsci (1971) and Althusser (1971/2008) as well. Cleaver (1979) also writes:

> [D]espite the originality and usefulness of their research into the mechanisms of capitalist domination in both the economic and cultural spheres, and indeed precisely in the formulation of those mechanisms as one-sidedly hegemonic, Critical Theorists have remained blind to the ability of working-class struggles to transform and threaten the very existence of capital. Their concept of domination is so complete that the "dominated" virtually disappears as an active historical subject. In consequence, these philosophers have failed to escape the framework of mere ideological critique of capitalist society (p. 42).

To further illustrate this point, it is useful to consider how the dominant ideology and media hegemony theses treat media audiences. According to Stuart Hall's (1980) encoding/decoding theory, media audiences are hardly uniform: Rather than unproblematically accepting the codes or intended meanings of specific media texts, audience members may occupy one of three positions in relation to ideological meanings, according to their economic, political, and cultural backgrounds:

- *Dominant/hegemonic position* – Media audience members in this position share the text's code and take its meaning directly.
- *Negotiated position* – Media audience members in this position accept or reject a mixture of dominant elements.
- *Oppositional position* – Media audience members in this position understand the literal meaning of the media text, but do not share its codes and in fact challenge its ideological content.

Using Hall's categories, the dominant ideology thesis stresses the dominant/hegemonic position, whereas the media hegemony thesis draws attention to both the dominant/hegemonic position and the negotiated position. Both smack of textual determinism, i.e., the theoretical assumption that media audiences interpret texts as they were intended to be read by media makers, because neither gives any consideration to the possibility that audience members may occupy oppositional positions or produce resistant readings, etc.

Furthermore, the dominant ideology and media hegemony theses overlook the pervasive forms of "quiet resistance" that operate outside of formal organizations, movements, and revolutions, such as foot-dragging, false compliance, sabotage, shoplifting and employee theft, arson, vandalism, and so on, even though these are the ordinary means of class struggle (Scott 1985; 1990; 2009; Sprouse 1992). The internet and digital technologies also facilitate acts of quiet resistance, such as piracy of music, movies, television shows, software, and copyrighted texts. These and other violations of intellectual property law are not only widespread, but a large majority of internet users—as many as 70 percent, according to one study—view these actions as socially acceptable (TorrentFreak 2011).

Moreover, quiet resistance can feed into open forms of resistance, such as when activist media makers steal resources or use pirated publishing software in order to create activist/alternative media products. This omission from hegemony theory is especially significant considering that quiet resistance is ubiquitous, whereas revolutions are episodic events. Capitalists have been forced to adjust to everyday forms of anti-capitalist resistance, for instance, by creating entire industries based around what radical economist Michael Perelman (2010) has termed "guard labor," i.e., jobs whose function is primarily to "protect [capitalists'] commodities, including the goods and premises they own, but

especially the labor-power in their employ. Capitalism's reliance on guard labor deforms the entire productive process, not only wasting labor, but also snuffing out badly needed creativity" (p. 10). By Perelman's estimate, approximately a quarter of all jobs in the U.S. economy could be classified as guard labor, including security guards, police, military personnel, managers, cashiers, bill collectors, lawyers, and so on.

In his book *Gramsci is Dead*, political theorist Richard Day (2005) also mounts an important anarchist challenge to hegemony theory's assumption that there is a distinct, single enemy that contemporary social movements are fighting. Rather, contemporary social movements are engaged in "in a disparate set of struggles, each of which needs to be addressed in its particularity" (pp. 5-6). Day argues that contemporary movements operate under the "hegemony of hegemony," meaning the belief, widespread among Marxist and liberal activists, that seizing state power in order to impose a new hegemonic order is necessary to achieve freedom. Against the Gramscian view that only mass movements can break hegemony by organizing into a counterhegemonic bloc capable of seizing state power, Day argues that contemporary social movements display an "affinity for affinity, that is, for non-universalizing, non-hierarchical, non-coercive relationships based on mutual aid and shared commitments" (p. 9). Elsewhere, Day writes:

> [C]ontinuing with an exclusive focus on hegemonic change via the state form, or on escaping it entirely, prevents us from imagining and implementing modes of social organization that are not only possible and desirable, but are becoming ever more necessary as Empire consolidates its hold on our bodies, minds, lands ... on our very ability to produce ourselves and the contexts in which we encounter others (p. 176).

Hegemony theory's failure to appreciate the oppositional position and the ubiquity of quiet resistance, to recognize the anti-Marxist character of contemporary movements, and more generally to link ideology with subaltern group's actual experiences with media, leads to vanguardist strategies such as those proposed by

Gramsci (1971) and Lenin (1902/1969), which seek to move the working class from "trade union consciousness" to "socialist consciousness." For anarchists and fellow travelers, as I have already suggested, this approach leaves much to be desired.

THE CRITICAL POLITICAL ECONOMY TRADITION

While European scholars tended to base their critiques of the mass media in Marxist understandings of culture, ideology, and hegemony, over the past several decades, U.S. and Canadian communications scholarship "has made substantial contributions to political economic theory, once the primary emphasis of European research," observes Vincent Mosco (2008, p. 47). The political economy of news media encompasses multiple perspectives, which range from mainstream to more radical views, all of which focus on the production and reproduction of society (e.g., Hardy 2014; McChesney 2007a; 2008a; Mosco 2009; Wasko, Murdock, & Sousa 2014; Winseck & Jin 2011). It is useful, then, to briefly highlight notable differences between two general approaches: *mainstream (classical) political economy* and *critical political economy* (Atton & Hamilton 2008; McChesney 2007a; Mosco 2009). First, mainstream political economy—as founded by classical political economists Adam Smith (1776/1937), David Ricardo (1817/1973), Thomas Malthus (1820/1963), James Mill (1821/1963), and his son John Stuart Mill (1848/1909)—assumes the moral desirability of capitalism as inevitable and obvious. On the other hand, critical political economy—as founded by Karl Marx (1859/1970; 1867/1967; 1893/1967; 1894/1967), Thorstein Veblen (1989/2007), and other heterodox political economists—challenges capitalism's assumed moral desirability. As Atton and Hamilton (2008) observe:

> Critical political economy … seeks to evaluate morally the modes of production and reproduction, and to recognize the immense inequalities produced by

> capitalism. However, also importantly, critical political economy does not take such inequalities and such a system as natural and thus inevitable. By contrast, it views them as the cumulative and ongoing result of countless intentional policies, human decisions and actions that not only reproduce these inequalities and this system, but that also serve particular interests – in some cases, an individual's interests, but much more frequently impersonal, social interests such as those interests of a particular class (p. 24).

Second, as Mosco (2009) notes, mainstream political economy has all but eliminated its political dimension, choosing instead to concentrate on economic issues, such as the outcomes of different combinations of productive factors (p. 21). Although some critical political economy acocunts tend to dwell on how market forces influence news production (e.g., Baker 2002; 2007), overall, this tradition embraces its broad, interdisciplinary nature, which draws inspiration from economics, political science, sociology, journalism, communication, and other areas of study (McChesney 2007, p. 39; Mosco, pp. 21-23). Third, mainstream political economy falls into the tradition of administrative research, which purports to be neutral or value-free, whereas critical political economy does not shy away from its Marxist or prescriptive overtones (McChesney 2007a, pp. 39-45; 2008a; Smythe 1977; Smythe & Van Dinh 1983).

Unlike framing and hegemony, critical political economy does not represent a specific theory of news media power so much as it does a tradition of critical analysis and argumentation which calls attention to the relationship between media industries and other centers of power, such as corporations, the state, and the military-industrial complex. Beginning with pioneering studies by Harold Innis (1950/1972; 1951), Herbert Schiller (1969/1992; 1973; 1976; 1989), and Dallas Smythe (1957; 1960; 1977; 1981),[*]

[*] Important work by the sociologist Charles Horton Cooley (1864-1929) arguably predates these North American scholars. According to Peter Simonson (2012), "Across more than three decades of work, Cooley provided an expansive vision for communication study that blended normatively grounded political economy, interpretive sociology, social psychology, and cultural criticism into a larger project committed to democracy as a way of life. His was the first extended American social theory of communication, which he took to be constitutive of selves, moral communities, and society writ large" (p. 1).

critical political economists of media have cast a wide analytical net, seeking to explain mass media power and performance in terms of factors such as ownership patterns, market pressures, advertiser influence, federal law, journalists' routines and beliefs, and the general intellectual culture, all the while connecting their analyses to larger concerns about governance and human freedom (e.g., Bagdikian 2004; Foster, Holleman, & McChesney 2008; Hamilton 2004; Herman & Chomsky 1988/2002; Herman 1982; 1992; 1995; 1996; Lloyd 2006; McChesney & Nichols 2010; McChesney 1997; 1999; 2000; 2004; 2007a; 2008a; Mosco 2009; Parenti 1986; 1992). Although I cannot examine every analytical theme that critical political economists touch on, I take up major ideas below.

Media Ownership and Market Pressures

"All approaches to the political economy of media take it as axiomatic that the media industries—the structure of the markets they operate in, their patterns of ownership, the strategies of key players, trajectory of development, and so on—are important objects of analysis," observes Dwayne Winseck (2011, p. 11). According to the mainstream political economy perspective, media systems based on private ownership, the profit motive, and markets are preferable to other systems, because they establish and promote a "free marketplace of ideas," which enables media audiences to make informed decisions as consumers and citizens (Entman 1989; Ginsberg 1986; Peterson 1963).

The superiority of capitalist news media has become an article of faith in U.S. journalism schools; it is represented, for instance, in the widely taught "social responsibility theory of the press" articulated by Theodore Peterson (1963), which holds that the major functions of the press in Western democratic capitalist societies such as the United States are to (1) service the political system by providing information and a forum

for debate/discussion, (2) enlighten the public to make it capable of self-government, (3) safeguard individual rights by acting as a government watchdog, (4) service the economic system by bringing together buyers and sellers via advertising, (5) provide entertainment, and (6) maintain financial self-sufficiency in order to remain free from influence of special interests (p. 74). Moreover, in the mainstream political economy view, capitalist media markets self-correct problems as they arise, because media audiences will avoid content they find objectionable, while gravitating toward that which appeals to them. This view comes very close to uses and gratifications theory, which holds that media audience members select and use media from all the available options, based on their individual needs and motives (Katz 1959; Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch 1973; Katz, Gurevitch, & Haas 1973; Lee 2013; Ruggiero 2000).

The innate, obvious superiority of capitalist news media has become an article of faith in the U.S. academic community and journalism schools, even though elsewhere in the world, media systems are understood to be the outcome of policy decisions. As McChesney (2008a) observes:

> For much of the past century there has been a decided split in the political economy of media between U.S. scholars and those based in almost every other nation in the world. In the United States it generally has been assumed, even by critical scholars devoted to social change, that a profit-driven, advertising-supported corporate media system was the only possible system. The media system reflected the nature of the U.S. political economy, and any serious effort to reform the media system would have to necessarily be part of a revolutionary program to overthrow the capitalist political economy. Since that was considered unrealistic, even preposterous, the structure of the media system was regarded as inviolable. The circumstances existing and transmitted from the past allowed for no alternative (p. 52).

Drawing from a long tradition of radical press criticism in the United States (McChesney & Scott 2004; Reynolds & Hicks 2012; Seldes 1938; Sinclair 1919/2003), the critical political economy perspective challenges the optimistic mainstream view of

capitalist news media. Critics and scholars working in this tradition contend that the free marketplace of ideas is highly idealized, given that a small handful of powerful corporations own and control the lion's share of the country's traditional forms of media (print, television, and radio)—about 90 percent, in fact—as well as the major distribution channels and huge portions of the internet. The chain of mergers which resulted in this state of affairs accelerated rapidly over the past three decades, with the number of major mass media firms shrinking from over 50 in 1980 to the small handful which dominate today's media landscape (Bagdikian 1983; 1987; 1990; 1992; 1997; 2000; 2004; Baker 2007; Herman & Chomsky 1988/2002; Noam 2009).* This rapid mass media convergence is of concern to activists, dissidents, media critics, critical media scholars, and journalists because eliminating or absorbing competitor news organizations threatens media diversity, creates content discrimination within media markets, keeps female and minority ownership of media at low levels, and undermines the public interest, such as when media produce content that prioritizes entertainment over information (Bagdikian 1983; 2004; Baker 2002; 2007; Barnouw et al. 1997; Klinenberg 2007; McChesney 1997; 1999; 2004; McCord 1996; Turner & Cooper 2006). Some critical political economists take this a step further, arguing that capitalist ownership and control over mass media institutions virtually guarantees that certain types of news will rarely if ever be published or broadcast, such as stories which directly contradict U.S. foreign policy narratives, or stories which undermine the interests of media owners and/or the parent companies of mass media institutions (e.g., Herman 1982; 1992; 1995; 1996; Herman & Chomsky

* Although he is not a critical political economist, according to Eli Noam (2009), media ownership by "insiders" (families, newspaper founders, and top managers) has declined steadily since 1984, across all mediums, while corporate ownership of media has grown. However, Noam observes, "the popular belief that convergence in the information industries has resulted in a small group of media moguls is not an accurate one. A better description is one of a large number of fund managers owning, on behalf of their fund investors, narrow slices of a big pie" (p. 407).

1988; Herman & Peterson 2010; Parenti 1986).* Moreover, news outlets with more reach, prestige, and resources than other media organizations constitute the top tier of the U.S. media system, which has considerable influence in supplying information and defining the news agenda for lower tiered news media – a process referred to as intermedia agenda-setting (Herman & Chomsky 1988/2002, pp. 4-5; McCombs 2004).

Critical political economists also argue that media consolidation and market pressures compel news organizations to cut costs and push stories that are easier/cheaper to produce and which attract larger audiences. As newspapers search for ways to save money, it is inevitably the case that investigative reporting and other resource- and time-intensive forms of journalism are first on the chopping block. This has negative consequences for an informed democratic citizenry, as well as subtly suppresses activists such as those involved in criminal justice reform and anti-death penalty organizing, who not only benefit from investigative reporting but in fact work closely with investigative journalists to expose police misconduct and false convictions. The threat posed to daily newspapers by media consolidation and market influence is a huge cause for concern, because most original reporting still comes from newspapers and other traditional news media (McChesney 2013; McChesney & Nichols 2010; Pew 2010).

As Charlene Simmons (2010) observes, several media scholars view the internet as a democratizing alternative to the corporate consolidation of traditional forms of media, because web users can access and share diverse perspectives. However, critical political economists point out that a process of media consolidation occurs online as well, which leads directly to the same problems caused by corporate consolidation of traditional media, such as content discrimination and the marginalization of diverse

* As Gitlin (1997) notes, in response to these criticisms, the news industry has "been bending over backwards to avoid the charge of taint," as evidenced by journalists' overt attempts to critically cover news media organizations' parent companies (p. 8).

viewpoints (Baker 2007; Blevins 2002; Dahlberg 2004; Foster & McChesney 2011; Herman & McChesney 1997; McChesney 1999; 2004; 2013; Simmons 2010). In addition, most web users tend to spend a large majority of their time online using software and websites owned and controlled by large media companies such as Facebook, Microsoft, Apple, and Google, i.e., what some scholars refer to as the "web within the web" (Herman & McChesney 1997; Simmons 2010). As noted in Chapter 1, the corporate nature of online media and the gatekeeper roles played by websites such as Facebook creates a tension between activist beliefs and behavior, because activists express concern over the corporate structure of mainstream news media, yet incorporate social media into their organizing.

Advertisers and the Audience Commodity

A large body of historical research and cultural critique traces the development of sophisticated advertising and public relations techniques over the past century, showing how these have been used to mislead the public, protect and empower corporations, instill commodity fetishism, and promote a consumerist culture (Carey 1997; Clark 1988; Cohen 2003; Ewen 1996; 2001; Ewen & Ewen 1982; Fones-Wolf 1994; Leach 1993; Lears 1994; Ohmann 1996; Preston 1996; Schudson 1984). Because advertising is the main source of revenue for mass news media in the United States, advertiser influence is also a central concern for critical political economists of news media, who draw attention to advertisers' influence on news production, as well as the historical symbiosis between advertisers and news media institutions. McChesney (2007a), an influential critical political economist, traces his own views on the mass media-advertiser relationship to the Marxist theory of monopoly capitalism developed by Paul Baran and Paul Sweezy (1966)

in their seminal book *Monopoly Capital*. According to Baran and Sweezy, in monopolistic capitalist societies such as the United States, advertising takes on special importance as a means by which the economy absorbs surplus: The role of the "the sales effort," as they refer to it, moves "from being a relatively unimportant feature of the [capitalist] system … to the status of one of its decisive nerve centers" (p. 115). As McChesney (2007a) summarizes their argument, which has great import for critical media scholars:

> In a capitalism dominated by large corporations operating in oligopolistic markets, advertising becomes a necessary, even mandatory, competitive weapon. Firms no longer produce as much as they can to sell at a market price over which they have no control. They can produce only as much as they can sell at prices that permit them satisfactory profit, and they have considerable influence over pricing. Advertising, and marketing more generally, is the means to that end, especially since it does not require cutthroat price competition (p. 69).

This view has profound implications for critical media scholars and anti-capitalist radicals, one of which is that, as a result of the U.S. transition from its pre-Civil War system of partisan media to a commercial media system based on advertising revenue, journalism became "the lynchpin of the political economy of American society" (McChesney & Scott 2004, p. 10). The mass media's reliance on advertising revenue directly contributed to the emergence of the U.S. consumer culture which exploded in the early years of the Gilded Age, during which ad-supported magazines and newspapers began to reach large audiences and create a mass culture (Baldasty 1992; Leach 1993; Lears 1994; Ohmann 1996; Schudson 1984). These same economic pressures also helped pave the way for the hallmarks of objectivity which have come to define mainstream commercial journalism, such as depoliticization, nonpartisanship, and journalists' reliance on official sources, which by creating a class of "professional journalists" provide a form of industry self-regulation (Baldasty 1992; Hackett & Zhao 1998; Herman

& Chomsky 1988/2002; Kaplan 2002; Mindich 1998; McChesney & Nichols 2010; Schudson 1978).

According to the mainstream political economy view of capitalist news media, the mass media's principal good or product is "news"—the magazine, daily paper, radio or television program, etc.—which is distributed to readers, viewers, and/or listeners who are conventionally understood to be the media's clients or customers. That is to say, in the traditional view, media consumers have sovereignty, because the mass media give them what they want. Critical political economists invert this relationship, by theorizing that news audiences are actually the "product" news organizations sell to advertisers, who represent the mass news media's *actual* customers. This perspective is summed up in V.O. Key's (1964) observation that "newspaper publishers are essentially people who sell white space on newsprint to advertisers" (p. 379).

According to the "audience commodity" theory, first articulated by Dallas Smythe (1951; 1977; 1981), the main transactions in media markets occur between media companies and advertisers, not between media companies and audiences or consumers. In this view, the mass media exploit and commodify media audiences, who perform unwaged "work" on behalf of mass media institutions. The value of this work—e.g., what advertisers are willing to pay—is determined by price schedules based on market research to determine media ratings and desirable audience demographics.* In this view, because advertisers are the main customers exerting demand in the marketplace, journalism is basically a positive externality and advertisers have enormous influence over shaping news media content as both censors and gatekeepers (Artz 2008; Baker

* It is hardly surprising that Smythe was a vocal critic of the administrative research methods used to collect this demographic information (Smythe & Van Dinh 1983).

1994; Caraway 2011; Fuchs 2012; Herman & Chomsky 1988/2002; Meehan 1984; 1993; Smythe 1951; 1977; 1981).*

The Role of the State

Critical political economists also draw attention to the role of the state in enacting policies which can either facilitate the growth of democratic forms of media, such as legal provisions carving out space for community radio and public access television stations, or, alternatively, strengthen the corporate media giants which currently dominate today's media landscape, such as deregulation which makes it legal for media companies to own and operate multiple TV stations in the same media market. Critical political economists contend that, by allowing corporations to dominant the mass media market, the federal government has been negligent in its responsibility to uphold the first amendment, which guarantees freedom of expression (Baker 2002; 2007; Lloyd 2006; McChesney 1993; 1999; 2000; 2004; 2007a; McChesney, Newman, & Scott 2005; McChesney & Nichols 2010).

The Propaganda Model

Although, as noted above, critical political economy does not represent a specific theory of news media so much as it does a broad array of concerns, one account of critical political economy bears mentioning. A popular theory of news media performance among left-progressive activists in the United States is the propaganda model, developed by Ed Herman and Noam Chomsky (1988/2002) in their influential

* For in-depth discussion of the relevance of Smythe's audience commodity theory for contemporary critical media studies, see Fuchs (2012).

book *Manufacturing Consent*, which is firmly rooted in the critical political economy tradition, but also borrows insights from studies of ideology and media sociology. The propaganda model includes five filters which, when taken together, purport to explain the institutional behavior of mass news media. These filters are:

1. The size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of mass media corporations (pp. 3-14).
2. Advertising as a primary source of revenue for the mass media (pp. 14-18).
3. The reliance on official sources of information, such as government officials, businesspersons, and experts funded by concentrations of power (pp. 18-25).
4. 'Flak'—press criticism—as a means of disciplining the news media, so that its content does not stray far from the fixed parameters of acceptable thought (pp. 26-28).
5. 'Anticommunism', an ideological filter, which serves as a national religion and control mechanism (pp. 29-31). This filter might be updated to anti-terrorism or simply "fear."

As Herman and Chomsky explain,

> These elements interact with and reinforce one another. The raw material of news must pass through successive filters, leaving only the cleansed residue fit to print. They fix the discourse and interpretation, and the definition of what is newsworthy in the first place, and they explain the basis and operations of what amount to propaganda campaigns (p. 2).

As a testable, theoretical account of news media performance, the propaganda model predicts that certain issues will receive uneven or inadequate coverage in mainstream news, such as the "unworthy victims" of repressive U.S foreign policy or

state terrorism committed by U.S. allies such as Israel and Colombia (Chomsky 1989; Herman 1982; 1992; 1995; 1996; Herman & Chomsky 1988/2002; Klaehn 2005; 2010; Mullen & Klaehn 2010; Tedrow 2009; 2011).

Because it paints an unflattering portrait of journalists and the news industry, among journalism and mass communications scholars, the propaganda model often is derided as taking a conspiratorial view of media (e.g., Corner 2003). In fact, one of the model's second-order predictions is that it will be marginalized within academic circles (Jensen 2010; Mullen 2010; Mullen & Klaehn 2010). However, as Herman and Chomsky (1988) observe, far from representing a conspiracy theory, their model actually offers a free market analysis of the mass media. Moreover, the propaganda model is notable in that it does not simply predict media behavior and performance, but also theorizes about the relationship between mass media institutions and other structures of power in advanced capitalist societies. As Andrew Mullen and Jeffrey Klaehn (2010) observe:

> Within the context of the social sciences, the PM [propaganda model] constitutes a critical-structural model. It is in the first instance concerned to explore the interplay between power, social structure and ideology. Social inequalities within the broader society and social world are highlighted by the PM. It is fundamentally democratic and advocates scholarship that is accessible and can be read and understood by specialist and non-specialist audiences alike (p. 225).

The propaganda model is widely assumed to be a theory of media influence, because many assume the model predicts that the mass media "manufactures" or secures public consent for elites. However, this view is mistaken. As Herman (1996) observes, "[Noam Chomsky and I] never claimed that the propaganda model explains everything or that it shows media omnipotence and complete effectiveness in manufacturing consent. It is a model of media behavior and performance, not media effects." Moreover, Herman and Chomsky (1988/2002) state explicitly in the introduction to *Manufacturing Consent* that "we are talking about media structure and performance, not the effects of the media

on the public" (p. xii). The propaganda model is also built on case studies of prestige news media reporting on foreign events, which may leave readers less equipped to challenge this framework. However, this is not a limitation of the propaganda model itself. For instance, as Mercedes de Uriarte (2010) has shown, the model can also be applied to study local news coverage of issues such as gentrification.

CRITICAL POLITICAL ECONOMY'S IMPLICATIONS FOR STRATEGY

Compared to most other social science research traditions, few of which have forged important connections with contemporary oppositional movements, the critical political economy of media appears as somewhat unusual, because scholars working within this tradition have joined in activist efforts to influence communications policies and structures, while laying important groundwork for the U.S. media reform movement (Mosco 2008; McChesney 1999; 2004; 2007a; 2008b). As Mosco (2008) observes, "Praxis, or the unity of research and action, is a fundamental characteristic of a political economy approach. Most political economists of communication have been activists as well as scholars, involved in media democracy, development communication, independent media and universal access work, as well as with labour, feminist, and anti-racist movements" (p. 58).

To take a notable example, Robert McChesney, who explicitly links his critiques of mass news media to prescriptions for federal communications policy and calls for media activism (e.g., 2001; 2004; 2008a; McChesney & Nichols 2010), co-founded and serves as the president for Free Press, a national media reform organization that seeks to protect net neutrality, i.e., the principle that internet service providers should treat all online data equally instead of discriminating against certain types of users or content. In

addition to McChesney, journalists and critical scholars working from within a critical political economy framework such as Noam Chomsky, Ed Herman, Michael Parenti, Norman Solomon, Jeff Cohen, Naomi Klein, Amy Goodman, and others have lent their voices to a wide array of left-progressive efforts. Within the academy, critical political economists associated with the Union for Democratic Communications, an association of activist communications scholars, have also cast their lot with opponents of neoliberalism and media oligopolies.

In terms of linking theory with movement strategy, activists have distilled at least two important lessons from the critical political economy tradition. The first main strategic implication for activists is that they should engage in media reform efforts aimed at breaking up consolidated media. The second implication is that activist media makers must be mindful of how they structure and subsidize alternative/activist media projects.

Media Reform and Contesting Media Monopoly

According to framing scholars William Gamson and David Meyer (1996), even though the mass news media are relatively open to movements, "Ownership and consumption patterns of media, as well as their relation to the state and political parties, are relatively stable and generally beyond the scope of movement claims" (p. 287). Against this view, critical political economists argue that activists can and should contest the institutional structure of mass media by incorporating media reform strategies into overarching movement goals. The mass media are treated not simply as tools or resources which activists can exploit or use in order to further their efforts, but rather, are seen as

powerful institutions that activists involved in diverse struggles must bring under popular control if they are to have any hope of succeeding. To quote McChesney (2008),

> No one thinks any longer that media reform is an issue to solve "after the revolution." Everyone understands that without media reform, there will be no revolution. In that sense it is similar to the labor movement, where the demand for free trade unions, hardly revolutionary in its own right, is a necessary precondition to building a viable organized left that can contest for power. Even if we do not get the revolution in the United States, media reform much like organized labor can make the nation a more just and humane place, for its own inhabitants and the peoples of the world (p. 59).

Thus, although critical political economy depicts the mass news media primarily in an adversarial capacity, it is an adversarial conception linked to a significant implication for activist strategy. As an active participant in the media reform movement, McChesney (1993; 1999; 2000; 2004; 2007a) argues that both citizens and the federal government can play important roles in shaping communications systems during "critical junctures," i.e., "those historical moments when the policy-making options are relatively broad and the policies put in place will set the media system on a track that will be difficult to reroute for decades, even generations" (McChesney 2004, p. 24). Today, activists and movements find themselves in a critical juncture, as battles are being waged to save net neutrality from telecommunications corporations that seek to privatize the internet by deciding which web content can be downloaded at the fastest speeds (McChesney 2008a, p. 57; 2013). For critical political economists such as McChesney, efforts to break up oligopolistic media industries, protect net neutrality, restore popular control over the news media, and create a truly democratic news media system will depend to a great extent on state intervention, in particular federal communications laws and tax breaks for various kinds of news media (McChesney 1997; 1999; 2000; 2004; McChesney & Nichols 2010).

The notion that the government should have any role to play in regulating media markets or subsidizing news organizations is anathema to mainstream political economists and other defenders of the capitalist press, who consider it natural and obvious that the state should not intervene in the mass media system. Critical political economists counter that this view of news media is ahistorical; the federal government has played a significant role in subsidizing media in the United States, as well as crafting policies that benefit capitalist media companies (Lloyd 2006; McChesney 2004; McChesney & Nichols 2010).

For instance, when Congress passed the Post Office Act of 1792, which established postal routes and allowed newspapers to mail at low rates, they created a vast, publicly subsidized infrastructure for exchanging information across the country. Although newspapers and pamphlets accounted for about 95 percent of all mail weight, they brought in less than 15 percent of all postal revenues. As the only nationalized industry, for several decades the Post Office was the largest branch of the federal government, employing 75 percent of civilian federal employees in 1831 and an even higher proportion in 1860. In fact, by 1832 there were more postmasters than soldiers. This subsidy was an incredible boon to newspapers, whose numbers fairly exploded in the early decades of the republic (Lloyd 2006, pp. 23-34; McChesney & Nichols 2010, pp. 121-7). Newspapers were also subsidized by lucrative government printing contracts and benefited from railroads and mass forced schooling, i.e., state policies that helped promote a large, literate population. According to Mark Lloyd (2006), whose important book *Prologue to a Farce* traces the history of communications in the United States, the massive subsidy for papers represented by the U.S. postal system reflected "Madison's civic vision, a vision that elevated the importance of popular information and public opinion that would dominate communications policy in the early republic" (p. 34).

Because today's capitalist media system does not elevate the importance of popular information, or for that matter value popular participation in the process of making meaning, critical political economists argue that it is out of sync with the principles on which U.S. democracy was founded.

Structuring and Subsidizing Alternative Media

The critical political economy critique has also profoundly influenced how left-progressive activists approach questions related to structuring and subsidizing alternative/activist media projects and institutions. Over the past several decades, beginning with the New Left movements of the 1960s and 1970s, activist media makers have increasingly expressed concern over the fact that prominent alternative media institutions tend to replicate corporate hierarchies and divisions of labor. This has motivated several activists to organize alternative/activist media institutions as collectively run enterprises in which editorial responsibilities are shared (Albert 1997; 2006a; 2006b; Atton 2002; Atton & Hamilton 2008; Downing 2001). In addition, by calling attention to the troubling influence of advertisers, critical political economy has challenged activist media makers to seek alternative revenue streams to fund their projects (Albert 1997; 2006a; 2006b; Angel 2008). For instance, the radical left publication *Z Magazine* is not only organized nonhierarchically, but has been ad-free and subsidized primarily by reader subscriptions since it was first published in 1987.

Arguably, a problem with the critical political economy perspective is that, by focusing so much attention media convergence and audience-exploitative nature of advertisements, this research tradition has, regrettably, discouraged some activists from

giving serious consideration to the question of how movements can generate revenue for the media they produce. As Jen Angel (2008) observes:

> A central problem in activist culture is the denial of money as a powerful force. Whether it's that people are afraid of money because they don't understand it, they believe that it's just a tool for capitalist lackeys, or they feel that it's an instrument that can only be used for evil, this kind of mythology around money means that activists and organizations often lag far behind their conservative or for-profit counterparts in terms of building structure and long-term stability. To build projects and institutions that are sustainable and effective within the capitalist system we currently live in, we need to fund them. There simply needs to be money to pay for paper, computers, and electricity. To fund projects and institutions, we need two things: activists that understand money and can use it effectively, and activists who will support institutions with financial resources (pp. 22-23).

As Angel and others emphasize, there are diverse forms of media subsidy that activist media makers can take advantage of, if they wish to eschew advertising. Journalism scholar Jay Rosen (2009), for instance, identifies twenty different sources of subsidy besides advertisers, including government, political parties, rich benefactors and philanthropists, related and unrelated businesses, spin-offs, colleges and universities, religious groups, family members, e-commerce, and passionate news consumers. In addition, activist media makers can generate revenue by holding benefit concerts, hosting bake sales and garage sales, asking for donations, taking out loans, and using credit cards (e.g., Angel 2008). Software piracy, black market activity, and expropriation—theft from employers and corporations—also helps subsidize various activist media projects, even if activists do not write about these activities or discuss them openly. It should be mentioned that some revenue streams have important drawbacks—for instance, crime can subsidize media quickly but also land activists in jail—while other revenue streams may be consonant with a publication's goals but fail to generate a steady flow of income, such as paid subscriptions.

ANARCHISM AND CRITICAL POLITICAL ECONOMY

For anarchists, especially those in English-speaking countries such as the United States, critical political economy accounts of media likely have more influence than other critical theoretical accounts of the mass media, owing to the influence of Noam Chomsky, a known anarchist, as well as the Anarchist FAQ, which offers a summary of Herman and Chomksy's (1988/2002) propaganda model in its section covering the anarchist critique of news media (McKay 2008, pp. 380-386). And indeed, from an anarchist perspective, the critical political economy tradition has important strengths: To begin, the critique of corporate ownership of mass media institutions is a naturally corollary to the anarchist/autonomist critique of the commodification of information and the enclosure of the knowledge commons (Hamilton 2004; Kidd 1988; 2003; 2010; Smythe 1981), as well as the critique of corporate influence in everyday life (Deetz 1992). Political economists' activism on behalf of net neutrality is basically consonant with anarchism's premium on media systems and communicative processes that enable non-hierarchical information flows, free from corruptions of informational power. In addition, political economy's strategic implication that activists should break up media monopolies and restore democratic control over media institutions is basically consistent with anarchism's assault on different forms of domination and power structures. Likewise, critical political economy's implications for activist/alternative media makers are consistent with the premium anarchism places on prefigurative politics and direct action. Finally, the critical political economy tradition is notable from an anarchist activist-scholar perspective because the researchers who work within this tradition tend to be very close to those activists who stand to benefit from their research.

For anarchism, where critical political economy arguably falters is in its recommendation that activists should pursue strategies aimed at pressuring the state to

enact policies to regulate media markets, break up monopolies, and help subsidize media systems. As Gordon (2006) observes, "Clearly anarchist theory is not geared towards underpinning 'policy change', which inevitably means change through the state. Rather, the goal is to underpin various forms of grassroots action that take place outside and as-against the state" (pp. 17-18). Furthermore, anarchists might argue that news media owners, politicians, and other elite actors have no strong incentive to enact policies promoting media democracy and a vibrant press, because doing so would undermine their power and prestige.

There are two points to be made here. The first is that critical political economists obviously are not opposed to grassroots efforts to establish democratic media outside and as-against the state. McChesney (2008a), for instance, considers the media reform movement to be one of three branches of media activism, which is closely related to those involved in creating grassroots, independent media, and to those who provide criticism of the mainstream media (p. 58). The second point to be made is that, in the view of anarchists such as Chomsky (1970/2005; 2002; 2005), media reform efforts which seek to leverage the power of the state against powerful media companies are actually *consistent* with anarchist politics and the goal of a stateless, classless society. Chomsky (2002) argues that anarchists must be able to defend at least some attempts to defend and expand state power, because the state provides essential services—such as welfare and forms of healthcare—that are under attack by conservatives and powerful corporations. Although both the state and corporations must ultimately be dismantled in the anarchist view, the population exerts at least some control over the state, whereas corporations basically operate as unaccountable, private tyrannies. "Supporting these aspects of the governmental structures just seems to me, to be part of a willingness to face some of the complexities of life for what they are – and the complexities of life include the fact that

there are a lot of ugly things out there," he observes (p. 346). This is consistent with Chomsky's position that anarchists and other activists should look for ways to "expand the floor of the cage," that is, extend the limits to what the current political-economic environment currently allows, on the assumption that doing so will serve as a preliminary for ultimately dismantling the state and corporations (Barsamian 1997).

Chapter 6: Interview Research Methodology

Despite the mountain of critical communications research generated by scholars over the past several decades, in an important sense the interrelationships between critical media theory, activist consciousness, and movement strategy remain hazy. Scholars have studied activists' media consumption habits as well as their use of mainstream media, alternative/activist media, and digital technologies in their activism and organizing (e.g., Atton 2002; Atton & Hamilton 2008; Castells 2012; Downing 2001; Earl & Kimport 2011; Harlow & Harp 2012; Harlow & Guo 2014; McCaughey & Ayers 2003; Rodríguez 2001;Waltz 2005). However, it remains unclear how most activists actually *think about* the many dimensions of news media power, how they incorporate these understandings into their activism and organizing, or whether these understandings mirror or reflect the content of critical and radical communications theory as theorists understand it. It is in this disconnect—between those who research corruptions of information power and the activists and dissidents who could benefit from this research—that anarchist scholars can play an important role, as activist researchers who assist other radicals in their capacity as movement map makers (Ehrlich 2001; Gordon 2006; 2008; Graeber 2004; Shukaitis 2004; Shukaitis & Graeber 2007; Stein 2001). Engaging with activists' actual beliefs and dilemmas is essential for generating reflexive radical political theory. This is true not just for anarchist researchers, but for activist social science researchers across the board (De-Shalit 2000; Gordon 2006; 2008; Graeber 2004; Shukaitis & Graeber 2007). To quote Gordon (2006):

> By bringing the (often conflicting) views of activists to a high level of articulation, the theorist can construct a discussion where the activists' debates can be undertaken in a more precise and clear way, with attention to detail and a coherent thread of argument. The role of the theorist, on this score, is to partake in and facilitate the reflexive process of theorising among activists, functioning as a

> clarifier, organiser and articulator of ideas, an activity that takes place with and for activists. Her or his goal is to address, in theoretical form, the issues that activists face in their everyday organising, to assemble ideas so that they can be discussed carefully, to lay open hidden assumptions and contradictory statements, and in general to advance activists' thinking by transposing it from the fragmented terrain of brief and informal debate to a dimension where a more structured and "high definition" discussion can be undertaken – to the written page (p. 17).

Thus, in addition to developing anarchistic theoretical arguments in Chapters 2 through 5, this study features an exploratory research component which examines how contemporary activists think about media power and media-movement interactions as it relates to their organizing and activism. The basis of this investigation is a series of in-depth, ethnographic interviews conducted with activists based in Austin, Texas. The purpose of this interview research is twofold: First, it aims to explore how the theoretical arguments in this dissertation possibly resonate or conflict with contemporary anarchist understandings of news media. Second, these interviews initiate exploration about the ways in which contemporary anarchist understandings possibly deepen or extend the theoretical arguments of this dissertation. Below, I review the dilemmas and methodological considerations which shaped the interview research process.

THE IRB DILEMMA: JOURNALISTIC PRACTICE VERSUS HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH

Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) are committees of experts and researchers charged with reviewing and approving projects that involve human subjects research, intended originally to address medical and criminal activity privacy for subjects. On university and college campuses, IRBs are responsible for ensuring that all research conducted by faculty members and graduate students does not violate federal, institutional, or ethical guidelines. At the time this dissertation was proposed, researched, and written, the IRB of the University of Texas at Austin required all PhD students to

obtain its approval—including those engaged in oral history, journalism, and biographical research—before conducting anything it considered to be human subjects research. This is because UT-Austin's IRB, like most IRBs, proposes a broad definition of human subjects research:

> Any systematic investigation that is designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge, and which involves living humans about whom an investigator obtains information through intervention or interaction or obtains identifiable private information, qualifies as human subjects research.*

After a series of medical and behavioral experiments in the 1930s and 1940s—notably, the Tuskegee syphilis study and Nazi research on concentration camp prisoners—raised important questions about the ethical commitments of those engaged in human subjects research, Congress passed the National Research Act in 1974, which identified basic principles and guidelines for responsible research, as well as prompted the establishment of IRBs throughout the country. IRB protections for human subjects were initially designed to monitor the activities of researchers engaged in biomedical and behavioral research, that is, areas in which research subjects need strong protections from possible abuse (Edgar & Rothman 1995; White 2007). Although it is important to insure that subjects are neither mistreated nor abused, and that researchers conduct themselves in an ethically appropriate, responsible manner, IRBs are not immune from criticism. For instance, many of those who serve on IRBs at universities and colleges maintain important links with industry, as funding recipients, consultants, speakers, members of advisory boards, and so on. This represents a conflict of interest when these board members participate in protocol decisions sponsored by companies with which they have a financial relationship (Campbell et al. 2006).

* See http://www.utexas.edu/research/rsc/humansubjects/faqs/index.html

Furthermore, First Amendment defenders argue that IRBs' broad conception of human subjects research ought to be challenged, because allowing institutions to oversee research based in journalistic methods of inquiry (in particular, in-depth interviews with subjects who are willing to go on record) constitutes a form of prior review. This is the position that my dissertation co-chair Dr. Mercedes de Uriarte and I arrived at, after consulting with constitutional lawyers and comparing UT-Austin's IRB protocols with those used at other universities. Our position—that UT-Austin's IRB has no business inserting itself into research rooted in journalistic practice—is supported by scholarly and legal arguments that IRB's "mission creep" is unconstitutional and deeply at odds with the American free speech tradition, because it threatens the integrity of humanities research and violates the First Amendment principle forbidding the licensing of inquiry and speech (Borenstein 2008; Dingwall 2008; Hamburger 2005; Kerr 2006; White 2007). Moreover, IRB guidelines allow interview subjects to withdraw their participation at any point in the research process, which can threaten critical inquiry by motivating researchers to avoid asking hard questions or engage in other activities that could offend interview subjects. The suggestion that interviewees, several months after being interviewed, could revoke permission for a writer to publish their comments would be an absurd, insulting proposition to most working journalists in the United States. Yet this is a reality that many journalism scholars must live with.

Unfortunately, faculty and students who do not comply with IRB guidelines face stiff penalties; for PhD students, the situation is worse, because IRB compliance is mandatory to graduate. Thus, although Dr. de Uriarte and I contested the UT-Austin IRB oversight of doctoral dissertations rooted in journalistic practice, ultimately we gave in to institutional pressure. This means that, as part of the process of obtaining IRB approval for this study, I had to grant UT-Austin's IRB final say over the interview script I used. I

was also prohibited from interviewing people who were not physically in Central Texas, even if those persons were involved in activist efforts in Austin. UT's IRB also told me that I could not hire or recruit someone to help with transcription duties, because I would not be allowed to share the audio recordings. Whatever their intent, these IRB rules restrict inquiry.

When it came to actually conducting interviews, moreover, I had to preface each one with a lengthy, canned description of informed consent, my responsibilities as a researcher, and my interview subjects' rights as research participants. These presentations often prompted conversations regarding institutional policies that work to alienate activist researchers from the movements they seek to theorize about. An important point which emerged in these conversations is that although IRB guidelines serve to protect interview subjects from any misconduct on my part, these same provisions could also require me to hand over recordings or transcripts to the police or courts. Although this is unlikely to happen, this institutional threat represents a subtle form of state suppression and a corruption of informational power. It also undermines the ethical position of the press that off-the-record information provided by a source must be protected by the journalist as confidential. This position is protected by some states as well.

SELECTING AND INTERVIEWING SUBJECTS

While surveys and other quantitative research methods can provide useful pictures of trends in activists' relationship with media (e.g., Harlow & Guo 2014; Harlow & Harp 2012), these methods are also impersonal, tend only to scratch the surface, and are less than ideal for allowing respondents to freely communicate their ideas, beliefs, and experiences. Furthermore, when very little is known about a subject matter, fact-finding

missions based on qualitative methods are preferable, because they allow researchers to access underlying themes and ideas that quantitative studies tend to gloss over (Lindlof & Taylor 2002; Potter 1996). For this study, then, my investigative tool was the in-depth, ethnographic interview. According to David Fetterman (1989), "the [ethnographic] interview is not an excuse to interrogate an individual or criticize cultural practices. It is an opportunity to learn from the interviewee" (p. 55). "The qualitative interview is a remarkably adaptive method," observe Thomas Lindlof and Bryan Taylor (2002), because interviews can be conducted nearly anywhere in relative privacy, the scope of topics which can be covered is limitless, and interviewers can adopt formal or informal stances (pp. 170-171). Face-to-face interviews, moreover, allow interviewers and interviewees to establish common ground, which helps to put both parties at ease.

The research site I chose was Austin, Texas, which is often referred to as a "drop of blue" in an otherwise red state. This description obscures the fact that Austin is documented as s city segregated by race, ethnicity, and income. Moreover, it is thoroughly gentrified and there are deep divisions between the city's liberals and radicals. Nevertheless, Austin is an ideal place to study activists' beliefs about news media. Not only does the city feature a history of important, radical political activism (Dugger 1974; Rossinow 1998), but it is currently home to a large core of activists working on various leftwing and progressive causes and issues. Also of note, in Austin it is relatively easy for one to "tap into" the radical and/or left-progressive community through events such as talks, fundraisers, and protests. In addition, alternative media played an important role in Austin during the political struggles of 1960s and 1970s (McMillian 2011) and continue to do so. It bears mentioning that 'radical' is not a static term, because activist support for a cause defined as radical during the 1960s (or an earlier era) may now be considered a new norm. Many of the radicals of the 1960s and 1970s have mellowed to liberal

positions, moreover, which possibly makes it more difficult to identify anarchists or other radicals to interview.* In general, then, the question of whether someone or something is truly radical is an uninteresting question, similar to definitional disputes over whether certain kinds of news media could be considered alternative or activist.

As Michael Albert (1998) observes, the U.S. left suffers from a "stickiness problem," which is to say that, over the past several decades, the left has been able to retain only a small percentage of the millions of people who have come into contact with, worked with, or become part of the Civil Rights Movement, the anti-war movements, the feminist movement, and other notable causes. Due to the fractured nature of the U.S. left, as a result, today it is common to find that dedicated radical and left-progressive activists in various towns and cities drift in and out of groups and causes, and often know one another through informal or digital networks rather than membership-based organizations. According to Alberto Melucci (1996),

> Contemporary 'movements' assume the form of solidarity networks entrusted with potent cultural meanings, and it is precisely these meanings that distinguish them so sharply from political actors and formal organizations next to them. We have passed beyond the global and metaphysical conception of collective actors. Movements are not entities that move with the unity of goals attributed to them by ideologues. Movements are systems of action, complex networks among the different levels and meanings of social action. Collective identity allowing them to become actors is not a datum or an essence; it is the outcome of exchanges, negotiations, decisions, and conflicts among actors (p. 4).

Of course, this is not to discount the fact that some activists have devoted themselves to specific causes, organizations, or groups in Austin – in some cases over periods of several years or even decades. Rather than construct case studies of specific causes or group, though, I investigated the ideas of members of a community or network of activists. This

* The obverse is true as well: Figures who pass for liberal Democrats in today's political environment, such as Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, would be described as moderate Republicans a half-century ago.

approach recognizes the overlaps among activist groups and the "rhizomatic" or "submerged network" character of contemporary leftist formations (Day 2005; Deleuze & Guattari 1987; Funke 2012a; 2012b; Hardt & Negri 2004; Melluci 1989; 1996).

Another important reason I decided against a case study approach is that I sought quality interviews with people who have long involvement in activism, on the assumption that these individuals had thought more about media power and media activism than movement newcomers had. Due to the "stickiness problem," it can be hard to identify activists who fit this description; furthermore, activists often hold a low opinion of journalists and researchers who "parachute" into communities without giving anything in return. This methodological consideration, then, assumes the researcher possesses some familiarity with the community being studied, i.e., key groups and figures, local history, notable campaigns, triumphs and tragedies, and so on. Although I did not begin interviewing activists for this study until 2014, I had already familiarized myself with Austin's activist scene, through my own activities as an anarchist activist and radical media maker, and by supporting various causes in Austin for well over a decade. It is fair to say that I shared, to a certain extent, an insider perspective with those I interviewed. My activist credentials also helped me secure more recommendations and contact information for possible interview subjects.

A wide-ranging, in-depth investigation of how activists think about news media represents an undertaking far beyond the scope of this dissertation. My immediate, more modest aim is simply to initiate exploration in this area. Based on media reports of local activist groups, supportive contacts, and my familiarity with Austin's activist scene, I was able to reach out to 30 different activists involved in diverse groups and causes, such as prison reform, death penalty abolition, transit activism, socialist organizing, and anti-gentrification efforts. This number was restricted by IRB's requirement that all

interviewees must be in Austin. Of these, about half either declined to be interviewed or failed to respond to my outreach. As a result, I conducted a series of in-depth, loosely structured, ethnographic interviews with 16 activists and organizers in Austin, Texas between August 2014 and January 2015. The interviewees included nine men, six women, and one gender non-conforming person. While I was able to interview women who identified as socialists, progressives, or radicals, none identified as anarchist. One woman mentioned during the interview that the term "anarchist" might characterize her politics, but she was not familiar with this tradition and her comments did not reflect an anarchist ethos or sensibility. From these interviews, five were selected to be examined in this dissertation, because the interviewees identified as anarchists or horizontalists,* or their comments reflected anarchistic ways of thinking about news media and digital technologies. The remaining eleven interviewees identified as leftists, progressives, democratic socialists, and Marxist-Leninists. These will be addressed in another work.

According to W. James Potter (1996), in the ethnographic interview, the researcher "informs the interviewee of the purpose of the interview and then takes control by asking questions and probing the person's responses. This type of interviewing is structured like survey interviewing; the key difference is that it is responsive to situations rather than standardized" (pp. 96-97). For instance, at certain points in interviews, I departed from my interview script in order to probe areas in which the interviewee had strong opinions. During other interviews, I skipped over questions when it became obvious that the person I was speaking to had very little to say on the topic. I allowed interviewees to speak their mind. One respondent, for example, devoted most of the interview to discussing his life history. As a result, interview lengths varied: In a little

* The terms 'horizontalist' and 'horizontalism' come from the anti-capitalist, directly democratic *horizontalidad* movements that emerged during Argentina's December 2001 economic crisis (Sitrin 2006).

over 34 hours of interview audio, the shortest was approximately 50 minutes, and the longest clocked in at over 3 hours. Most interviews lasted about 2 hours each. I conducted and audio-recorded each interview in person, rather than by phone. While interviewing activists for this study, I made it a point to meet with them in places that were relatively free from distractions, but also places they felt comfortable. This means that 12 of the 16 people I spoke with invited me into their homes. Occasionally I had to pause recordings so that interviewees could speak with housemates, run errands, or tend to household affairs, such as cooking or feeding goats.

CONDUCTING, TRANSCRIBING, AND PRESENTING INTERVIEWS

After reviewing and obtaining informed consent, I asked each interviewee a series of questions based on a prepared interview script. The script, which can be found in this dissertation's Appendix, included 33 questions, many of which I skipped over or tailored to each interview subject. Interview questions focused on the following five themes:

- *Background information*. I asked each interviewee for basic personal and demographic information, such as the respondent's name, preferred gender designation, brief personal history as an activist, and a summation of that person's political beliefs. Due to the amount of work involved with with transcribing and analyzing interviews, these questions helped me at the outset to group or distinguish among activists based on their political orientations.
- *Media use*. I also asked some basic questions about where interviewees receive their news, whether they typically consumed digital/online media versus more

traditional forms (print, television, and/or radio), and what types of news they consume (e.g., immigration, criminal justice, etc.).

- *Sense of theory*. Several interview questions were designed to examine interviewees' sense of theory – how they think about social reality, their ethical-political commitments as activists, and how they view the relationship between means and ends, in particular whether means and ends should be consonant. These questions sought to arrive at a deeper theoretical understanding of how activists' personal political beliefs relate to their views on media and activism.
- *Views on mainstream media*. I asked several questions about how interviewees perceive the mass news media, what role(s), if any, they see for mainstream news media as it relates to activism and organizing, how interviewees make use of mainstream media in their own activism, and what influence they believe these activities have. For example, I asked interviewees to describe media activism they engaged in which they considered to be successful.
- *Views on alternative/activist media*. Similarly, I asked several questions about what role(s), if any, interviewees see for alternative or activist media as it relates activism and organizing, how interviewees make use of alternative/activist media in their activism, and what influence these activities have.

After recording interviews, I used Dragon NaturallySpeaking, a speech-to-text software that can be integrated into Microsoft Word, for transcription purposes. The act of transcription allowed for preliminary identification of common themes. Analysis of the interview content allowed comparison of perspectives, ideologies and motivation, as well as interviewees' views on how mass news media relates to organizing and activism. The

findings from these in-depth, ethnographic interviews will be examined in the next chapter.

Following feminist social science researchers, in presenting findings in the next chapter, I allow my interviewees to speak for themselves as much as possible, by providing portions of interview transcripts, rather than just snippets or summaries of interviewees' comments. As feminist scholar Shulamit Reinharz (1992) observes, "Transcripts of the interviews … familiarize readers with the people who were studied and enable to the reader to 'hear' what the researcher heard" (p. 39). Moreover, including verbatim responses by those interviewed allows readers to examine the exchanges included without concern that those responses have been, however unwittingly, modified by interpretation or mediation. I have also included my side of these conversations where appropriate, so that readers can appreciate the multiple voices in each interview (Paget 1981; Reinharz 1992).

Chapter 7: Ethnographic Interview Findings

This chapter examines findings from the 34 hours of interview research conducted for this dissertation.

BIOGRAPHIES AND PERSONAL POLITICAL BELIEFS

Of the 16 activists who consented to be interviewed, three self-identified as anarchists and two others expressed personal political beliefs that could be characterized as consonant with anarchism. The other eleven interviewees explicitly distanced themselves from anarchism and libertarian socialism by identifying as Marxist-Leninists, democratic socialists, or simply as leftist or progressive activists. For each of the five selected interviewees, organized alphabetically by last name below, I provide first and last name, age at the time of being interviewed, preferred gender designation, activist background, and a general sense of that person's political beliefs. All 16 interviewed lived in Austin, Texas at the time the interview research was conducted.

scott crow, 47, male, who prefers that his name be spelled without capitalization, is a longtime anarchist activist, writer, and public speaker. For over 25 years, he has organized around animal liberation, radical environmentalism, and political prisoner issues. In 2005, in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, crow helped organize Common Ground Collective, an anarchist relief organization based on a decentralized network of non-profit groups. In 2011, he published a book based on his experiences in New Orleans (crow 2011). More recently, he has appeared in national news media as a voice critical of government surveillance, due to his former relationship with Brandon Darby, an FBI informant and former Common Ground Collective member.

(For background and crow's views on this issue, see Williams & crow 2015.) Based on hundreds of documents obtained via Freedom of Information Act requests, on May 28, 2011, the *New York Times* published a front page story profiling crow, which described how counterterrorism agents had spent years surveilling him and other radical anti-authoritarian activists.

Unlike the other four interviewees in this chapter, who attended college, crow did not complete high school. Although most of the activists I spoke with treated theoretical concepts latently, crow brought several anarchist ideas into our discussion during our interview, such as prefigurative politics, the nature of power and oppression, and direct action.

> MT: Do you identify politically as anything? Where do you place yourself in the political spectrum?
>
> sc: I think if I had to throw on a label, that would be an anarchist, but I would only use that as a point of reference, as an identifier to move on from that. The kind of anarchism that I ascribe to is little 'a' anarchism, which is really anarchy, which is not an 'ism', which is just a set of liberatory ideas and practices rooted in history that came out of European tradition, influenced by indigenous cultures.
>
> MT: How does that shape the activities in which you engage?
>
> sc: I think some of the basic ideas are the ideas of direct action, the fact that we don't have to wait on anybody else to make change, that we can do things ourselves if we see injustice, if we see things that are not right, that we can take action ourselves. So, that's one of the ideas, direct action. The second one is the idea of total or collective liberation. The reason I identify with anarchy is that doesn't look at a single issue like the natural world, or nonhuman animals, or prisons, or immigration, or transphobia. It looks at all of them as exploitative systems. So it kind of encompasses it. That's the other thing that draws me to it. The third thing, besides collective and total liberation, is the fact that we can have autonomy, that we don't have to be a part of political systems, we don't have to be a part of communities that we choose not to be a part of. We as individuals and communities have a right to determine our own futures, and be autonomous in making those determinations. All of this is a framework that people have named as 'anarchy'. I identify or affiliate much more with that.

> MT: How would you say that those values that you just spoke about, though, how do you think those actually shape the activities? That's the 'why'. What's the 'how'?
>
> sc: In a prefigurative sense, in the way that social organizations organize or businesses like worker co-ops organize, if you want to be liberatory, then an anarchist framework is, I think, a good way to do that. If I envision a greater world where we're sharing power, that we are not exploiting each other, nonhuman animals, or the natural world, then I need to figure out how to do that on the smallest scale that I can today, as an individual, in the choices that I make. Part of that is being in organizations that try power-sharing, that recognize that we are not on equal footing, that some of us have been taught to talk faster or are encouraged to share our voices more than other people – all these different, subtle ways that are social cues, political cues, cultural cues, that I think are all-encompassing. For me, anarchy is striving to form good social relationships with people, that are not about trying to have power over, but power with.

Anarchists and other radical activists often draw the same distinction crow does between *power over* and *power with* (Gordon 2008, p. 49-55; Starhawk 1988). The expression "power over" refers to power that is used to compel a person or persons to comply with someone else's will, against that person or persons' will or interests. The expression "power with," on the other hand, refers to power that people wield or exercise together, in order to accomplish tasks without there being a conflict of wills or interests (Gordon 2008, p. 50, 54). Crow said he receives his news from diverse sources, including old forms of corporate media such as television, but also newer forms of media such as online newspapers, news aggregators such as Google News, and partisan news media from various sources, such as *Huffington Post* and *Nation*, as well as anarchist websites such as Anarchist News*, Infoshop†, and the Center for a Stateless Society‡. Even so, he is far from a news junky. "A lot of times, with topical news, like what's happening today,

* See http://www.anarchistnews.org/
† See http://www.infoshop.org/
‡ See https://c4ss.org/

I barely pay attention to it, especially electoral politics. … I read a lot of science, a lot of art, a lot of philosophy … just a lot of articles with these subject matters," he says.

Alyse Deller, 28, gender non-conforming (prefers gender-neutral pronouns*), is an anarchist who describes their politics as nihilistic. As an undergraduate at the University of Alabama, Deller joined Students for a Democratic Society after its re-founding in 2006. In Austin, Deller volunteers at MonkeyWrench Books, an all-volunteer anarchist bookstore located in Central Austin, participates in anarchist study groups, and has worked with *La Semilla* (The Seed), a collective of activists who provide childcare at radical conferences. Deller's view of anarchist nihilism rejects compromises with the status quo, such as liberal reformist activism, because of the risks associated with capitalist recuperation, i.e., the process by which radical ideas become coopted or commodified by capitalist society.

> MT: Do you identify politically as anything?
>
> AD: My politics now are fairly nihilistic. I don't have any party affiliations. I don't vote.
>
> MT: How would you describe nihilism in this sense?
>
> AD: I wish I had read more about nihilism. [laughs] … I just don't have a desire to participate in any of the things that have been given to me as options for participation. I don't feel like that this is the world that I want, and I didn't ask for any of this. That's really frustrating for me. Also, personally, I like to operate my life in a way that isn't fearful. I feel like a lot of my life, I'm propelled by fear, like fear of not having a job, or not being able to pay rent, or not being able to get food, or whatever. I try to reject the notions of fear. I feel like, within that, there's the idea that there's nothing left to lose, which I feel is potentially a nihilist position. I've never read any Nietzsche.

* Due to the absence of intuitive, widely used gender-neutral pronouns, I have decided to refer to Deller with singular forms of 'they' and 'their'.

> MT: … I just want to come back to this: If people don't have any control over their lives, as you said [earlier in this interview], does that mean you believe in autonomy, or you don't?
>
> AD: I do.
>
> MT: It sounds like you don't.
>
> AD: I understand. To clarify, I feel like people have control over their lives. However, I think that it takes a lot of work to recognize the power that one has, or the extent to one's power. They're granted capitalist options. I can go buy a car and pick the color that I want, or I can choose who I date or something. Sometimes, maybe. I feel like there's minor concessions within the system, so I can make choices here and there. However, I think that for the most part, the extent of my power is being kept from me by the things that keep the system running. So, I do believe in autonomy and I feel like everyone can do their own thing, for sure. For me, it's been really important to be very critical of why I make the decisions that I make, and be really conscious and aware of where those decision-making abilities and what decisions I made, where that comes from. Because a lot of it's just learned by society and a lot of it is learned from my family, which is also affected by society. So there are legacies of choices that maybe I don't want to make, but I feel compelled to for whatever reason.

Deller says they do not consume much mainstream news media, preferring instead to read anarchist websites such as Anarchist News, radical blogs on the community blogging website Tumblr, and Black Girl Dangerous, a website that accepts submissions only from queer and transgender people of color.*

Marcus Denton, 33, male, works as a Medicaid/CHIP policy analyst for the Texas Health and Human Services Commission. He has participated in various left-progressive activist groups and causes since 1999, including Palestine solidarity efforts, anti-war organizing, and the Austin Project for a Participatory Society, an organization he co-founded, whose goal was "to find and build a community of people who shared a basic Left perspective that was radical, institutionally focused, broad in its perspective,

* See http://www.blackgirldangerous.org/

inclusive in its makeup, and concerned with matters of vision and strategy" (Denton 2008, p. 330). Denton says he cut his teeth as a student activist at Trinity University. Since moving to Austin, much of his activism has focused on "meta-activism," which he describes as "activism about how our activism can be the best it can be." More recently, he brought his radical left perspective to bear on public transportation issues, by participating in Austinites for Urban Rail Action (AURA), a group of community activists who helped defeat a proposed urban light rail line, which had regressive implications for working class and poor Austinites.

Denton said he thinks of himself mainly as a leftist and anti-capitalist, and perhaps even as a socialist, although he feels that he has "been turned off by a lot of bad socialism." His political trajectory, personal reflections, and interview responses suggest that the libertarian socialist tradition—which includes participatory economics, a vision he once actively promoted—has shaped his views in a significant way.

> MD: I have gone through various periods where I have identified strongly with certain strain of leftism. So, there were times when I thought of myself as an anarchist, when I thought of myself as — well, in sociology classes, which I majored in, I was always in the Marxian… you always get to choose your framework. But I never considered myself a Marxist or whatever. I was turned off by authoritarian socialism, which I identified with the International Socialist Organization. There were times where I was reading about feminism, and it seemed like, "Oh my God, this explains so much about everything. I really identify with this." I'm totally a feminist, or a feminist ally, depending on if a guy can be a feminist. And I guess with the foreign policy stuff, like protesting the war in Iraq, that was just being on the left and being anti-imperialist.
>
> Now I just kind of think of myself as capital L-E-F-T. For me, that means the radical left includes… it's anti-capitalist. I like the Zapatista definition, which is, you're on the left if you're against capitalism. Not to the exclusion of any form of other things we need to work on, whether that be racial and identity-based oppressions, or gender-based oppressions, or any other types of oppressions. I feel like all of those fit under the umbrella.… Trayvon Martin happens and it's like, "This is within the umbrella; I'm going to those protests." I don't really have a name for any of the rest of it. I consider myself part of a left.

Denton says he receives his news media from diverse sources, both mainstream and alternative, that he reads a daily policy blog, and that he actively supports leftwing and progressive experiments to create alternative media institutions. For example, he donated money to *The New Standard*, a now-defunct radical online newspaper free of advertising, as well as the *New York Times Examiner*, a radical press criticism website that daily scrutinizes the "Paper of Record."

Bob Libal, 33, male, is the executive director of Grassroots Leadership, a national, multiracial social justice organization founded by veteran organizer Si Kahn in 1980. Since the 1990s, Grassroots Leadership has been active in national efforts to push back against prison privatization, end detention of undocumented immigrant families, and promote criminal justice reform. Libal is no stranger to the mass news media, having been interviewed dozens of times for a wide array of local and national publications, both mainstream and activist/alternative, including the *New York Times*, *Huffington Post*, *Rolling Stone*, *The Nation*, *Z Magazine*, and others. Prior to being interviewed for this study, Libal was also a collective member at MonkeyWrench Books, and before that he was a student organizer at the University of Texas at Austin during his years as an undergraduate. Like Denton, Libal does not label himself as an anarchist, even though his politics reflect an anarchist sensibility.

> MT: How would you describe your politics? Do you identify politically as anything?
>
> BL: I haven't been asked that question in a long time. [laughs]
>
> MT: I ask because it's sort of a demographic thing.
>
> BL: Yeah, I think that… I don't know that I identify as any one sort of political ideology anymore. I think I believe in social movements and political decisions being driven by people who are most affected by the issues. I think I generally

> believe in inclusivity in decision-making. I'm the executive director of a non-horizontal organization, but I think that I believe in horizontal decision-making if not in sort of a very rigid sense, I believe in participatory decision-making. I think that those ideas are very much informed by the sort of anarchist organizing in the 1990s and 2000s. But I don't really identify as any political sort of belief anymore, I don't think.

Libal says he subscribes to the *Austin American-Statesman* and the weekend edition of the *New York Times*. He also listens to NPR, receives news on Facebook, subscribes to listservs, and regularly reads alternative media such as the *Texas Observer* and *Colorlines*. "I try to read everything about immigration and criminal justice," he says, due to his position and activism.

"**Tommy**," 26, male, is an anarchist who declined to allow me to use his real name. He says that after growing up in England and moving to El Paso while in middle school, he experienced a "culture shock" that led him to question organized religion, capitalism, international politics, colonization, and neoliberalism. "I think I got a pretty intense dose of what the world looks like, just from being there," he says. After studying philosophy at the University of Texas at El Paso, and traveling through Europe with queer anarchists in 2009, he moved to Austin in 2011, where he volunteered with a number of smaller groups, such as a harm reduction group and a childcare collective. His view of insurrectionary anarchism places a premium on maintaining unpredictable, potentially explosive moments and increasing people's capacity to revolt. Because his view of anarchism differs markedly from my own, I asked him several questions about his political beliefs and the process of intellectual self-discovery that led to them. He says that coming into contact with anarchists in California's Bay Area, along with his participation in an anarchist study group in Austin, strongly influenced his current political views.

T: I met a person … who ended up being very influential and had a very different version of things. Not all theory is academic.

MT: A lot of it is.

T: But there is a particular version of theory that is produced by humans that concerns people's everyday lives, and there's a way to think about ideas that brings study into how we live. It broke down how I thought about politics entirely. Instead of it being this thing that I'm dedicated to, that I'm submitting myself to something that's more important than me, study or theory is actually something that can enhance the way that I'm able to resist, personally. The thing that matters isn't necessarily revolution or winning, because maybe that's something that's just out of my hands. But instead it's, okay, how do I live my life in the most expansive of ways? How do I increase my capacity to revolt? How do I connect with other people and increase our collective capacity? How to maintain unpredictable moments? Just those sorts of questions.

Maybe anarchy is more about living a principled life, or living a life that is grappling with the compromises that we're forced to make living in society that we hate. Maybe that's what anarchy is, not this sort of far off, utopian future that's competing with all these other political philosophies for the right one. Instead, it's more of a way to put your finger on what you're against, and then a way to revisit that in every moment of your life, where you're presented with any number of compromises and you have to decide which side you're going to fall on, and to follow the path to the impossible, instead of the path back to society, which I think is the hand that's constantly offered to you. … I began exploring a more anti-political anarchist trajectory.

MT: When you say 'anti-political', you mean…?

T: Basically, one that breaks with the historical left in a lot of ways.

MT: In my mind, politics is much more inclusive, I guess, than a lot of people define it.

T: Yeah, and I guess I've use the word sort of clumsily so far. Specifically, anti-politics is a critique of representation and any structure or person that seeks to speak up for others. It's a critique of a certain scale. It's saying that, part of the way society manages to capture revolts is it gets us thinking on a totally inhuman scale. Most of the sort of traditional left anarchists' framework is, "Okay, how do we change all of society?" That's just far bigger than anyone can possibly decide. It's highly unlikely that an entire society of people is going to consent to your plan. It sort of brings it back, and puts the focus on individual lives, and the connections between those individual lives, and how to weaponize those

> individual lives, and how to put your finger on the way power control those lives, and how power might be interrupted in the context of those lives. That's the center, instead of it being global revolution…. That's still something that I desire, but it's not something that I think I have the capacity to create.
>
> MT: To bring about.
>
> T: Yeah, I think that if it happens, it will happen probably by accident. I'm interested in figuring out how to respond in such a moment, or how to be in a place to go as far, and as quickly, and with as many people as I can, but I don't think that it will be that because a small minority of conscious radicals have the right ideas that capitalism crumbles.

Tommy says he avoids consuming news media because of its routinized, uninteresting coverage of news and events, and that he prefers to read first person accounts posted online of important social-political events, e.g., the riots and demonstrations in Ferguson that occurred in 2014 and 2015.

> T: I was paying attention to Ferguson, one, because it's inspiring—there are certain moments that become inspiring—but that's less because of major news media and more because of actions on the ground. I made it a point to try to read only things written by people who were there, and usually not journalists. I usually don't think they have very interesting things to say about it. I'm much more interested in what the random person on the street thought than someone who's pretending to be objective.

UNDERSTANDINGS OF MEANS/ENDS AND PREFIGURATIVE POLITICS

In order to ascertain a deeper theoretical appreciation of how activists' political ideologies relate to their views on news media and social transformation, I asked each interviewee whether the ends of activists and movements justify the means used to obtain those ends. The answers to this question pointed to diverse, ambivalent views about the nature, meaning, and significance of prefigurative politics. Only three of the five anarchists felt that means and ends should always be consonant. To begin, for crow, the means matter in and of themselves, because the ends may never be realized:

MT: Do the ends justify the means, just in general?

sc: No.

MT: Why not?

SC: In my analysis, in my history, in my subjective perception of everything, is that when we get to that point, when we engage in that way, that we end up missing the nuances. We end up perpetuating the problems that we set out to solve. … We end up with a lot of unintended outcomes and consequences that we didn't see, that are just as problematic as where we started. Because I'm not here to win, I don't believe that we can win in politics, what I want to do is – I think my ethic is telling me that I want to, instead of saying, "I will wait until this revolution, or I will wait until this end goal for everything," is that I want to figure out how we can engage today for those tomorrows that may never come. So, again, back to power-sharing, working collectively, collaboratively, maintaining our autonomy, knowing that we can take direct action whenever we need to. And direct action is not always civil disobedience, to me, or always doing illegal actions. It can be anything: We decide to build a community garden for ourselves. We said we wanted food security, so let's do it. I think that the processes are absolutely as important as what comes out of it, and actually, sometimes the end goal doesn't matter.

As a nihilist, Deller indicated that means and ends do not always have to be consonant:

MT: Do the ends justify the means?

AD: Yes. I would say yes.

MT: Can you elaborate on that?

AD: I guess I can think of situations in which the answer would be no, but I think in general, for me personally the ends justify the means.

Denton, who expressed some frustration over this debate within activist circles, also indicated that he felt the ends could justify the means. His comments reflect the fact that he and his group are grappling with urban transit, a citywide political issue in which activists cannot achieve important gains without also making certain compromises. During our interview, Denton mentioned that the group he worked with was by no means

radical, because it included perspectives opposed to urban transportation on fairly conservative grounds.

MT: Do the ends justify the means?

MD: You know, we've had some of this debate within AURA, within the rail campaign. There's one guy in particular, who's just puritanical about the means being pure. And other people are like, "look, it's a campaign. It's a political campaign. Sometimes you gotta fight a little dirty." I don't have a clear answer on that. I think sometimes the ends can sometimes justify the means.

MT: Is that a different position than you might have had at another point in your life? Obviously, this question gets at prefigurative politics. Should our activism emulate the world we wish to see? Is that something you agree with?

MD: I do agree with that.

MT: But you think that there are exceptions.

MD: Yeah, because we're always taking shit, because… it's like, "You want the Keystone pipeline shutdown, but you drive a car. You're a human being, in America, and you're a consumerist, and you buy things, so obviously you can't have an opinion." No, fuck that. We're just doing the best we can, to try to change things for the better. The constraints of the world we live in don't allow us, don't allow the means, to be completely pure. … I probably default to Daoism, which is kind of the only other ethic, other than leftism, that I hold. Just follow the middle path, follow the middle way, and know that there are trade-offs, know that things have to be in balance. Don't do anything crazy, but if you've got a victory within your grasp, then secure it.

For Libal, the means and ends must not only be consonant, but this principle informs how his organization, Grassroots Leadership, engages in media activism. Whereas Denton considers it necessary, from a strategic/tactical perspective, for his group to sometimes use means that do not reflect its preferred ends, Libal considers it necessary, also from a strategic/tactical perspective, to engage in activism that is consonant with his group's overarching goals. Moreover, his thoughtful, intelligent response directly relates to the anarchist critique of unequal participation in the process of

meaning making. Below, he evokes Brazilian philosopher Paulo Freire's idea that activists must "make the road by walking":

> MT: Do you think the ends justify the means? Or are ends and means the same? Just in a broad sense.
>
> BL: I think I want to say no. In some ways, you make the road by walking. I think that we have a duty to be principled in the way we organize, in many different respects. I think that that is true both strategically and in a principled kind of way. A very concrete example: Oftentimes, when we have fought the siting of a new prison or new a detention center, one of the loudest voices that we can amplify, if we choose to, is a NIMBY voice—a "not in my backyard" voice— that is anti-immigrant or anti-prisoner. That are basically, "We don't want these people anywhere near us."
>
> MT: So, that's one of the options you have.
>
> BL: That's one of the options, and we choose not to do that. I think the reason we do that is both a principled reason—that we are in favor of the humanity of all people, including incarcerated people and immigrants who are detained, and that this is counter to our principle of that, to dehumanize people and say, "We don't even want you near us." Then I also think in the long term, it is not strategic to throw people under the bus to achieve a short-term aim. Because the more you demonize prisoners and immigrants, the more prisons and detention centers are likely to happen. There has to be a transformational component to the way that we work. I think that that's true in smaller contexts, like this story, but I also think that's true in the big picture. The failure of so many revolutionary governments and movements is often a failure to live up to their principles.

Although Tommy agrees that means and ends should be consonant, he questions the idea of prefigurative politics as most anarchists conceptualize it:

> MT: Do the ends justify the means?
>
> T: I mean, no. I think that the problem arises when they're separate.
>
> MT: So, are means and ends the same?
>
> T: They should be.
>
> MT: Do you believe in prefigurative politics?

T: No, not in the sense that it's usually used. I don't think that consensus decision-making is necessarily connected to some after-the-revolution condition, or that we can build the new world in the shell of the old. I'm skeptical of those attempts, but I do think that our activity ought to be measured by itself, or the immediate worth that it presents to our lives. If we're doing something because we think that we'll win in the end, it's not for me the reason I struggle. I strive to find ways to push and to struggle that might contain possibility, but they're just eminently obvious why it's happening, for the moment. The activity is desirable in itself, regardless of any particular consequences. Which doesn't mean that I don't care about consequences at all, but it does mean that the primary goal is to be engaged in activity that, as you're doing it, it makes you feel more powerful. As you're doing it, it deepens your connection with others. As you're doing it, it does all these things. As you're doing it, it sort of interrupts the way power strangles you.

PERCEPTIONS OF MASS NEWS MEDIA

Four of the five interviewees proffered an adversarial conception of mass news media, as well as indicated that, on some level, they viewed the mass media's constructions of social-political reality as representing a corruption of informational power. A recurring argument I heard from crow and others is that the mass news media serve as a conduit or megaphone for state-corporate constructions of reality.

MT: What do you think of mass news media?

sc: I think that it's unengaging, often ill-informed. I think that also it pretends to be unbiased when it's absolutely biased. It also creates false binaries — they always try to tell two sides to a story, when a story might have fourteen sides to it. It very rarely goes into depth with any substance. The other problem I have with it is, it's a mouthpiece for the state and corporations, either intentionally or unintentionally. They either have access or they want access to power, or they are power.

Deller expresses a cynical view that could be described as a dominant ideology thesis conceptualization of the mass news media. Echoing cynical critics such as Althusser (1971/2008), Deller argues that capitalism's reach is inescapable.

MT: In general, what do you think of mass news media, or mass media broadly?

AD: I think it's really scary. It horrifies me.

MT: Would you like to elaborate on that? What about it horrifies you?

AD: I was reading about William Randolph Hearst earlier, because I went to Hearst Castle, and it was this empire built on making shit up, yellow journalism. He made a bunch of his money because he was the first to make the connection between media and the government. That's really scary. I just feel like nothing is outside of the reaches of capital at this point, so I don't trust the media. That's why it scares me. It's so widespread. If anyone can make news, then I don't know what the truth is.

MT: When you say nothing is outside the reaches of capital, what do you mean?

AD: Well, people own news stations. People own newspapers. There's that element of the subjective there. News cannot be objective, because it's impossible.

Denton also did not mince words when describing the mass news media, insisting that the mass media directly undermines activist attempts at fomenting change.

MT: In general, what do you think of mass news media?

MD: [Laughing] I think it's worse than nothing. You're talking about mainstream…?

MT: Yeah, I'm talking about mainstream, mass news media. However you define that.

MD: I think it's absolutely awful. I think it is awful, awful, awful. I think it's not just bad. I think it's harmful. I think it's actively harmful. It's deluding people. I think it's propaganda. It's a corporate-state bias. It's establishment bias. It excludes alternative viewpoints. It prevents the creation of social movements and movements toward a better world. So, yeah, I think it's absolutely terrible.

Although Libal was critical of the mass news media as well, his comments also reflect the fact that he is both an avid news consumer and activist who frequently relies on the mainstream media to further his group's goals:

MT: In general, as an activist, as an organizer, but also as a person who reads and consumes news media, what do you think of mass news media?

BL: I think it can be good and I think it can be bad.

MT: How can it be good? Give us the good and the bad.

BL: I only get the New York Times on weekends now – I used to get it every day. ... I think there's a breadth, if not a depth, to some coverage in, say, the New York Times or NPR or something like that, that I wouldn't find otherwise, that wouldn't just show up in my Facebook feed. I think there are very good journalists still, even despite the collapse of traditional journalism in some ways. There are very, very good journalists that do excellent reporting, for both mainstream and alternative publications. Bad, I think probably for institutional reasons, largely, there's a lot of stuff that doesn't get covered at all, particularly local stuff. And oftentimes the coverage is episodic, and not systemic.

Unlike the other four anarchists, Tommy did not describe the mass media in terms of being either good or bad. In his view, the routinized character of the mass media news cycle renders it virtually irrelevant to radicals. His comments suggest that he appreciates, perhaps better than most activists, the difficulties associated with coverage of similarly routinized repertoires of contention, such as protests and demonstrations.

MT: In general, what do you think of mass news media?

T: I don't pay attention to it.

MT: Why?

T: Generally, I feel like it's totally irrelevant.

MT: Irrelevant in what way?

T: Things that happen on that sort of scale, I relate to similar to the weather. I want to know when it's raining, because then I won't ride my bike. But I'm not particularly interested in one outcome or another, that sets the tone for the world I live in, so the reporting on that I don't take particularly seriously. There are rare moments when I feel like something changes. I'm interested when things aren't predictable. Usually, wars, protests, elections, crime rates, and the happenings of celebrities — all of that stuff is just so on-script and so predictable that it doesn't surprise me or enhance my life in any way to know it. My life hasn't changed materially since ISIS has begun its invasion of the Middle East. I suppose it's sort of interesting, but I think you can get caught up reading books by Chomsky about this or that, like the intricacies of foreign policy and how it's so awful, and totally lose sight of your own life. I'm way more interested in people who are exploring, in super intense detail, what's going on around them. I don't necessarily mean

city politics. That's on a scale that's inhuman as well. But just the very real things that are happening in town that are motivating other humans in your space.

UNDERSTANDINGS OF MEDIA EFFECTS ON AUDIENCES

I also asked interviewees about what effects, if any, they thought the mass news media had on media audiences. In academic literature, this is referred to as the "third-person effect," which predicts that people perceive mass media as having a stronger influence on others than on themselves (Davison 1983). According to crow, the mass media—including both older forms of media as well as newer, digital media—"silos" people into insular worldviews.

MT: What effect do you think mass news media has on people?

sc: I think it has incredible influence. I think it's a mixed bag. I think that all news media silos people. There's people in a demographic who will watch Fox News and reinforce their worldview on things. The majority of the people who are watching Fox news are not watching Fox news, and then listening to NPR, or watching public television, and then going to something else. They're only watching Fox News, and they may go to some website like Free Republic, that will reinforce Fox news, or Glenn Beck's website or something, to reinforce that. So, I think that it's an inoculator and a reinforcer of those ideas, but it doesn't always give you breadth.

Deller argues that the mainstream news media influences media audiences works to limit possibilities for resistance to capitalism.

MT: What effect do you think that mass news media has on people?

AD: I think that it has a range of effects. I don't have TV, so I get my news from the Internet. And I get my news from only very small parts of the Internet. I don't read, like, BBC necessarily. I read things that people share on Facebook. I read things that people are sharing on Tumblr. Other than that, I don't really see the news. I think there are other people like that in the world, but there are also people who read the newspaper and those who watch TV. I think that based on however people receive the news, it has a different effect. …

MT: What effect, then, do you think mass media has on resistance or possibilities for it?

AD: I think it varies across the globe. I think in North America it definitely limits the possibility for resistance in a lot of ways. And I feel like it definitely has a certain prescription. Liberal resistance, up to a point, I think is allowable. But that's pretty much it.

MT: Because of media, you say?

AD: In part because of media. In part because of the fear associated with not playing the game of capitalism, because you will literally get murdered.

MT: Do you think people are afraid not to play the game of capitalism?

AD: Yeah, definitely. I mean, it's really hard not to, and there's very little show of people being able to pull it off. I think the conception of those who aren't playing the capitalist game is one of young, white anarchists, or people in the woods, and this sort of thing. I think people are afraid they won't have access to health care and all these other things, which is real and legitimate. Primarily, I think people are scared. It's scary.

Denton's response was also couched in strong adversarial terms, appealing again to the idea that capitalism's reach is inescapable.

MT: What effect do you think mass news media has on people, just in general?

MD: I think it distracts them from what's really important. I think it makes people believe they're not being deluded. I think it is such effective propaganda that it makes people think they are not being propagandized. So, it creates an illusion that we're living in an open society, which is another reason I would say it's worse than nothing. … I think it makes people think that we live in a free society, in a democracy. I think it just deludes people about the true nature of how the government works, how the market works, and how society is actually structured.

Libal's response was unique among the anarchists I spoke with, in that he suggested the mass news media can also be a possible inspiration for people to take action.

MT: What effect do you think that media has on people? Especially mass news media?

BL: Well, I think it probably shapes the parameters of what we think is the debate, acceptability. It also informs what is the world outside of our immediate [space]—like, there is no Zambia, because who knows anything about Zambia?

MT: So, in addition to maybe shaping the parameters, how people think about whatever, are there other influences or effects you think media has on people?

BL: It can be a motivator to take action. I think that framing of stories is really important for that. Take the border crisis. The border crisis demands action, because it's a crisis. How that action happens can be anything from opening shelters along the border to give people clothes to get where they're going, to taking a gun and pointing it at a kid.

Reiterating his criticisms of the scripted, routinized character of the news media, Tommy's response challenged my question's underlying logic.

MT: What effect, if any, do you think mass news media has on people? You don't pay attention to it, you say.

T: I think paying attention to it is a weird thing to do. It does have its effects, and I think that, again, those effects are distracting people from their everyday lives, from their own imaginations, their own creativity, their own ability to push back against what's happening in their own town. When they debate politics, it's on a scale that has nothing to do with their lived experience. We argue about which president matters more, we argue about whether this country was justified in bombing this other country. It's just totally irrelevant to the material lives of most of the people I know. For me, I'm interested in what's happening here. When things affect what's happening here, then it's interesting, but generally it's like sports or anything else. This is a thing we can pay attention to if that's what we want to pay attention to, but it's not particularly interesting. I don't feel like it informs me.

UNDERSTANDINGS OF STRATEGIC FRAMING AND MEDIA AS TOOLS/RESOURCES

All five anarchists indicated that activists should not rule out mass media engagement completely. However, two expressed strong reservations about doing so, either because of the danger posed by capitalist recuperation (Deller) or because of the problems associated with routinized social protest (Tommy).

> MT: Overall, do you think it's worthwhile for activists to try to use, or harness, or approach mainstream media and work with them?
>
> AD: I think so. I think the multi-tiered approach is always good, like a diversity of tactics situation. Whatever gets the thing done, I think is totally fine, but I think that there's always a risk of becoming commodified or rehabilitated by capitalism, which is the issue with the liberal position. How deeply can you get into the game without being changed by it? How can you approach the media and want real social change, and what will you accept? It's a losing game. It's a hostage situation, a "we'll take what we can get" kind of thing, and I don't want to feel like that. I don't think that that does anything.

Three of the anarchists—crow, Denton, and Libal—characterized the mass news media as a site of struggle, in which framing contests figure prominently. Their thoughtful, detailed replies to my questions suggest that, of the three theoretical perspectives examined in Chapter 5—framing theory, political economy, and media hegemony—the concept of media framing has had the strongest influence on how they think about news media power and media-movement interactions. During our interview, crow described at length how and why he approached the *New York Times* to cover his story of being surveilled by the FBI due to his political activities.

> sc: I was under surveillance by the FBI and joint terrorism task force, from at least about 1999 to 2008, which I still think is probably going on today. But an intense amount of that. A non-profit organized in Austin, Texas, called the Austin People's Legal Collective, did a Freedom of Information Act request for me, to the agencies. They got back documents; I got hundreds of pages of documents. I couldn't sue, because I was not denied employment or schooling. I couldn't sue the FBI for actually really illegally being surveilled, because I did nothing. They tried to indict me three times. None of this important, but I want to give you context. So, what was a thing I could do? I could talk to the media. I could use the power of the media to tell a narrative. I approached somebody at the New York Times that I had built a rapport with, who had used me as a source. Not an anonymous source – they had quoted me before. I had built a relationship over four years as a reliable source to talk about anarchism. That doesn't mean that we were friends, and we really were not. This was just somebody I had a contact with. But if they wanted to talk about anarchism, they could say, "Hey, what's an anarchist take on this? Can I quote you on this" So, I would do that – not that I was 'the' anarchist voice.

I approached him and said, "Are you interested in doing this, to talk about the wider surveillance?" This was before Edward Snowden broke out, so this was 2010. Nobody was talking about surveillance on the scale they were. There was a few articles that were coming out. But they saw the potential in this. In that, I said, "I want three things out of this piece: I want the ideas of anarchy to seem reasonable and rational. I want to seem reasonable and rational. And I want the FBI to look stupid, because they already look stupid." Now, the New York Times is not my whipping post. They're not my mouthpiece. They're not going to do it that way. But because I had those three asks, we worked on this piece for nine months, and I was able to have influence in shaping that, as far as that was concerned, in my limited scope. Whereas before, they would just quote you and you have nothing to say with it. The article came out and I won on all three of those points – even as they got everything wrong. They didn't represent anarchy the way I wanted it to be, but they didn't make it sound like chaos and destruction, either. I came off as very reasonable and rational. And the FBI, due to their own maleficence, their own bad work, came off looking like jackasses. That article had a huge amount of influence in spreading the ideas of anarchy, of making people reassess the surveillance state that we are under, and that I was a rational person to talk about these ideas.

MT: It was page A1.

sc: Exactly. I mean, the *New York Times* put anarchy in a positive light on the front page. Now, they got kicked by the right-wing media for it, and again, they got a lot of things wrong. So that was an example of where I tried that. And yes, it was absolutely successful. … And not only was it [that] the *Times* wrote about it, it was internationally picked up. And then other people wrote articles around it, because of that article. At the time, *Vice* or the *Huffington Post* could never have that kind of reach. So it was a very powerful medium in that way. The way I treated that was a conscious effort. This was after twenty years of working with the media. There's such a rudimentary misunderstanding about the way media works amongst activists, anarchists, and radicals. A lot of times we have these trainings where people get basic media skills, like flipping the script or having your talking points. But they never really develop an analysis about the power of media. Having gone through those things, I sort of developed this larger, deeper analysis about media and recognizing the power of the forms of media. A lot of radicals and activists don't ever see it that way. A lot of anarchists are very combative to media unless they're creating their own media, especially [to] corporate or mainstream media. They're very combative. What I'm saying is, "Look, let's use it to whatever advantage we can have, knowing that it has limits to it. And at the same time, tell our own stories our own way."

Earlier in the same interview, crow also described a new organization, called Agency, which operates as an anarchist public relations firm.* According to crow, Agency works to promote anarchist framings of news stories within the mass media:

> sc: With a personal bias also, for the ideas of anarchy, I've really worked for the last 15 years, really seriously, to shape and influence the way that anarchism is talked about in mainstream, corporate, and new media in the United States. That's a whole other thing. I do a lot of background, speaking to journalists. I've written books. I do interviews when people want to talk about these ideas. I speak at college campuses. Not because I'm tooting my own horn, but these are the ways to shift culture, to get people to talk differently about this. And I see that as very powerful – so powerful that some friends of mine started this thing called Agency, which is an anarchist PR firm. It's not secret. We don't represent all anarchists or all anarchist ideas. The idea is that mainstream civil society is talking about anarchy. So, are we going to let them control the narrative, or do we want to influence and have control over own narratives as best we can, recognizing that we will never have control over them?
>
> MT: That's the question I was about to ask: Is it even worth doing that sort of thing? 'Anarchy' has always been sort of a bad word in the mouths of many people.
>
> sc: But 'anarchism' is just a word. It's just a point of reference to a larger set of liberatory ideas. What I really want is for people to get past the word, to those ideas. Can I get those ideas talked about? I don't give a shit if we call it 'blue potato' or we call it 'horizontalism', which is what they did in Argentina. They didn't want to take the baggage of communism and anarchism. Or the Zapatistas – they didn't want to take the ideas of socialism, communism, anarchism. They called it Zapatismo. I'm the same. I don't care. But it's a little harder in the United States to do that, to invent new words and make them have. What I'm interested in is, presenting those liberatory ideas. And that happens regularly. We have changed the dialogue in the last 15 years – not just myself, but all of us who have engaged with that media. It's not just putting it into mainstream media, but also about building our own media, our own grassroots media, our counter-media, our alternative medias—which I don't even look at as alternatives—to build the new media. And that, I feel, has been incredibly powerful. I think it's totally worth it in those ways.

* At the time of this writing, Agency is still a fairly new political project. See http://www.anarchistagency.com/

When I asked Denton to describe how the group he worked with, AURA, developed a successful media strategy, he also provided a lengthy, detailed answer in which the careful construction and promotion of a specific strategic collective action frame, as well as framing theory's associated repertoires of contention (such as press releases, working with the media, etc.) were integral to his group's success.

> MT: AURA is the name of the group that was opposing the rail line. So, the goal was to stop that, right. Can you talk about the strategy that that group used? How did they stop that? How did they fight back against that?
>
> MD: So, we got involved very early on in the process. The earlier attempts by the city to get the rail line on the ballot in 2012 had essentially been a city-only—like, it was just the Austin Transportation Department putting forward an idea, trying to get approval for it, and then just moving forward. And so, this time around we pushed strongly from the start to get involved in the planning process itself. So, every step of the way, whenever new data was put out, whenever each step of the process that was moving toward selecting which part of the city, where should the rail line go, that sort of thing, which was phase 1, we got very involved in the data of that. We were producing counter-narratives on social media saying, "No, they're analyzing the data wrong. They're choosing the wrong data to look at." That kind of thing. I think that a conversation started much earlier than otherwise would have among people who are interested within the transportation community, the public transit community, about whether this is going in the right direction or the wrong direction. I think we started to stir up some controversy around it from the beginning, so it didn't have the opportunity to move through kind of unfazed. It was a death by a thousand cuts in a way. When it moved to phase 2, which was after they had selected corridors, which were East Riverside and Highlands, in phase 2 they proposed where the actual route would run. … Our goal was to be a credible voice of information, an informational counter narrative to what they were putting forward. We were saying, even with these ridership numbers, this is going to be the trade-off in the bus lines. The operations and maintenance costs will result in, we projected, the equivalent was a ten percent permanent annual cut to the bus system instead of expanding it. We put forward alternatives: a better billion that could be spent to improve transportation and relieve congestion.
>
> There were a lot of different groups involved in defeating it. There were well-funded anti-tax people on the right who were against it. But I think we played a really important role in muddying the waters for people who are generally supportive of public rail, light rail, public investments in transportation, that sort

of thing, and people who are just fed up with congestion and want to do anything. I think we were effective at kind of muddying that, with the message that this would be worse than nothing. Instead of having just a huge capture—like the 2000 vote did, where inside the city, especially along the route that was proposed, you had really strong support, there was still support for it inside the city along the route itself, where people would benefit most directly, but even there it was at lower levels. They're doing polling now to see what messages were the most effective, but the fact that it lost by fourteen points makes me think that it was a combination of a lot of things: being really expensive, being in the wrong place, being in a place this is just not intuitive for people. And then I think also we were able to peel off probably a few percentage points. It mostly occurred through social media, through press releases. We were trying to get interviews. We did get some interviews in mainstream media, that sort of thing. So, anyway, there was always an oppositional viewpoint. There's always a counter in every story. There was plenty of opposition to go around, so there was never a news media story that was out there that didn't have at least … we never had the full attention, but it was a least a soundbite from a detractor. And if it came from somebody who was pro-public transit, that was even more effective, in our opinion.

MT: How did you position yourselves as credible?

MD: I think because our analysis was the best stuff that was out there. It was better than anything the city was putting out, it was better than what Project Connect was putting out, which is the partnership between the city and Capital Metro. Their campaign was terrible. It was like, "congestion is bad." The arguments they were putting forward were terrible. They were saying, "Congestion's bad. Vote for the rail line."… We were saying, "It's worse than nothing. It will not improve congestion. It will make congestion worse. It will hurt the bus line. People will take more cars." … These weren't just blogs ranting. We were putting forward solid analyses and coherent arguments. Even though we were just a grassroots organization… The media attention was definitely, the narrative was always established first. I feel like the credibility of our arguments and the seriousness of our arguments allowed us to position ourselves well within the different competing voices. Even though there was a real tendency to try to simplify it to the pro-rail, anti-rail people—like rail is good, rail is bad—our argument was, "Rail is sometimes good and sometimes bad, and this is where it's bad."

MT: Did you think about framing as you worked on this issue?

MD: Yeah, absolutely. We had our debates going on all the time between both within AURA and among AURA and the other pro-public transit, anti-prop 1 groups, who were on the same page.

MT: About how to frame this?

MD: About how to frame it. You know, our argument was, "Worse than nothing," because their argument was, "Maybe it's expensive, but it's at least something. It's a step in the right direction. It's the first step in a larger system." Any argument, any other kind of frame like, "wrong route," or something, didn't answer that. That was always their comeback, "look, it's not perfect, but the perfect shouldn't be the enemy of the good." And so, any argument that said this isn't a good route, didn't answer that. So, we just constantly pounded on, "No, this is worse than nothing and here's why: It ruins the system long-term. It will pull dollars from the bus system and hurt the bus system. It will increase congestion. And the road money will be a complete waste. It will probably actually induce congestion, because that's what happens when you put more capacity on roads."

Libal also says that the concept of framing is essential for the activist work he and his group engage in. Here, again, he approaches important issues related to media activism with a strong anarchist sensibility, by connecting framing strategies with a concern for empowering future generations of activists.

MT: You mention framing. Do you think about framing?

BL: Yeah, definitely. All the time.

MT: All the time. Really? Do you think about other issues like that? I mean, I really want to know how activists think about media.

BL: Yeah, we do press work. We put out press releases. I think about framing, I think about who's delivering the message. I think about, how do those sound bites, and who's delivering them, how does it help our organizing efforts? For instance, there's pros and cons for it always being the same person who's delivering the message. People who get used to it, knowing who you are. Should it always be me who's the author of an op-ed or a letter? Or should we be distributing within our organization who it is? I think there's pros and cons.

MT: Is that issue of distributing the work just getting back to this idea of horizontalism, and sharing the work and the credit? Or is it more of an issue of public perception?

BL: I think it's both, I think they're interrelated, because if you share the work and you share the credit, that makes your organizing stronger, I think. You're building new voices, you're building new leaders. At the same time, it's

> confusing for the public to hear ten different articles with quotes from ten different people. There's a continuity issue.

UNDERSTANDINGS OF ADVERSARIAL FRAMING

Although all five anarchists took a dim view of mass media's influence on audiences, only two interviewees mentioned the mass media's use of adversarial or suppressive framing techniques.

> sc: When I look at the media, I look at it with an anarchist lens. A lot of times, even when they're talking about a problem, an issue, or problem solutions, it's always within the capitalist framing or the state's. What's the government going to do about this? How's the corporation going to deal with this? I ask the question, what are we going to do about it? How do we want to solve this problem? If I was in a community directly affected by this, what would I want to do about that, that doesn't just involve engaging that way?

Denton strongly criticized mass news media framing's implications for activists and movements along anarchist lines, drawing attention, as noted above, to the media's role in constructing realities that work to suppress movements.

> MT: How do you think [the mass news media] prevents the development of movements?
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> MD: One, because it's completely individualizing. It actually spends a decent amount of time focusing on individual things that people do that are inspiring. "Oh, this principal saved this school," or something. But very little on the social context of that. So, very little about, why are all the schools there in such bad shape? What are the conditions of the kids coming into these schools? What [c]ould it really look like?… Another big thing is, they frame the political spectrum in such a way that anything left of neoliberal centrist Democrat liberalism, anything left of Obama, is literally not even conceivable. Not even conceivable, because it's never portrayed. So, even in the run-up to a war or something, you have a small, small sampling of antiwar voices. I remember, during the Iraq war, this was pulling our hair out. The country's evenly divided at this point, and they're just giving all the air time to lies that are just being repeated ad nauseam by the administration, by their surrogates, by the people they don't need to be their surrogates but who are going to carry water for them anyway. It was like five percent are just purely antiwar views, when that's

actually a substantive portion of public opinion. We can only imagine what it would've been had there been an actual debate in the news media, or if the media had actually been critical, pointing out the lies that were being told, fact checking, that sort of thing. I think it's destructive to movement building, because it never shows people organizing. That's the other thing, it never shows people organizing communally. It never shows an alternative to getting help from established organizations. Or it's individuals doing something great, but it's never talking about the grassroots.

VIEWS ON FRAMING POLITICAL VIOLENCE

I also asked interviewees to comment on media depictions of political violence committed by activists and movements. For crow, the mass media's intense coverage of the property destruction committed by anarchists in Seattle in 1999 actually played an important role in breathing life into the global anarchist movement.

MT: After Seattle, there was a lot of complaints—even among anarchists—about media depictions of Black Bloc protestors and others who were committing property destruction and things that. What do you think of those critiques of the Black Bloc?

sc: The critiques? I don't care about the critiques. They're irrelevant. Think about this: Here's the anarchist narrative of this: 50,000 people to 80,000 people gathered—one of the largest gatherings in the United States at that point—that was super diverse. Indigenous people, labor unions, environmentalists, anarchists, and NGOs. International, working together. And the corporate media didn't even care. In the New York Times it might have been on page 30, if you were lucky. Anarchists smashed the windows of a Starbucks and NikeTown, and all the sudden it was front page news. All of a sudden, everybody wanted to know, "What's this globalization thing? Why are people protesting?" Internationally, it made huge news. And, at the same time, no matter all the crappy things that people said, it was a coming-out party for anarchism in the United States. It was the single biggest thing, because people around the world, including myself, saw that and said, "That is the thing I want to be a part of." Now, I was already leaning towards anarchism and already working on it, but that was the thing. "I'm going to go back and become an organizer again. I don't want to work in a co-op. I want to be in the streets organizing again." That was powerful. It was the linchpin for the coming-out party of anarchy in the United States in the twentieth and twenty-first century.

MT: So, because these protesters threw these bricks through the windows, that was in your mind not a bad thing?

sc: In the framing of the media, no, it wasn't a bad thing. Now, property destruction I totally agree with, especially corporate property destruction and no problems with, but I think there's a right time and a right place for it. That conversation is a whole different conversation about Seattle. But for the media aspect of it, it was incredible. And that wasn't even their intention. People who engaged in the property destruction were doing it for ethical reasons, you know, the symbolism of it all. It just was perfect. It was a perfect storm. Now, in the narrative of history, people may say terrible things about the Black Bloc and property destruction from that particular moment, but I can tell you it inspired thousands and thousands of people to recognize that they wanted to be anarchists, or that they were anarchists, or that they were going to start doing that stuff. Not just breaking things, but that anarchy was a thing. It was the death knell for the Socialists and Communists. That was way more powerful. That was a culture shift.

Deller also argued that mass media coverage of political violence committed by anarchists could benefit anarchists and other radical anti-capitalists:

MT: What do you want to say about violence in the media or depictions of violence?

AD: I just think it's really important to show, because no press is bad press. I think that's the kind of thing that gets people galvanized to do more and move away from liberalism, which is what I'm into. It might be risky, because people might want to shy away from violence, or they may want to condemn violence whatever violence is happening. But I think that, for others, that it's really important to see that shit can go down. For me, that was really formative. I read Pacifism as Pathology, by Ward Churchill, and I read How Nonviolence Protects the State, by Peter Gelderloos. Those things, as well as seeing how violence is portrayed versus how it actually happens – like, if I were at a protest and we were in a Black Bloc, versus how it was portrayed by the media the next day, having that experience and then seeing how violence is treated in a more global sense, I think it's important to cover whatever violent resistance is happening.

Although Denton does not use violent tactics in his activism, he also does not dismiss diversity of tactics out of hand. His comments reaffirm crow's observation, above, that mass media coverage of Black Bloc anarchists in Seattle helped draw people into the movement. However, Denton does believe that activists must also consider

whether the use of violent tactics is consonant with the goal of building inclusive movements, echoing Brian Martin's (2008) arguments that violent tactics conflict with anarchism's emphasis on prefigurative politics.

> MT: Let's talk about the Black Bloc, because the Black Bloc has been around since at least '99. So, in Seattle, when those Black Bloc protesters were throwing bricks through the windows of Starbucks or McDonald's, or whatever it was, they caught flak from the corporate media on the one hand, but they also caught it from various people on the left. What do you think of that, the left giving them…
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> MD: Giving them shit?
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> MT: Were these critiques justified?
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> MD: I do agree with … diversity of tactics. It sounds great. It sounds all positive. The problem is, though, some actions end up having an effect on more than that group. If you've organized a protest to show broad opposition to something, and you're trying to attract families, and you're trying to attract people of color, and then there's a small group that's going to act and use violence or use property destruction, and will predictably receive a strong police response, you are deciding for the rest of that march or the movement, that certain people aren't going to be as safe there, that it's going to be limited in scope. For me, it's a question of representation and democracy, or self-management within the movement about whether or not certain groups can do certain things. I don't oppose it, to answer your question specifically.
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> MT: What effect do you think violence has on viewers, like when they see depictions of violence in the media?
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> MD: To be honest, I think it is almost uniformly… I think it really excites people who want to stick it to the man.
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> MT: I kind of think that, too, actually.
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> MD: If you ask about, what's your first experience with the left? I remember sitting in class and being like, "What's going on in Seattle?" "Oh yeah, Seattle, there's a riot there or something." So, I went and looked it up. And it was like, "Oh, what is this anti-corporate globalization internationalist movement about?" That might have been my first exposure to the real left. So, I can't say it's all bad. But I will be honest, that I do really sympathize with… I think for most people, whether it's because it's portrayed this way or whether because they just think it's not appropriate and it's a bad tactic, it turns them off from participation. I don't

know that it never has its place, but I can see it being pretty destructive. And I think that's why the cops and the FBI, I think that's why they use it, because it is so effective at deterring people from involvement most of the time. …

MT: Or trapping people, ala Brandon Darby.

MD: Exactly, which still kills me to think about. I think about the civil rights movement sometimes and none of the reforms, none of the gains, none of what was signed, implemented — not none of it, but a lot of it…

MT: The gains of the movement.

MD: The gains of the movement partially relied on the threat of violence. It didn't exist in a vacuum. Martin wouldn't have been as effective if Malcolm wasn't on the wing, telling white America, "Look, this is an alternative. We've also got this, and we will defend ourselves." And the Black Panthers, and that sort of thing. Again, it's kind of conflicted. I generally find myself turned off by it, because I feel like it has a worse effect overall on the movement. I think it can theoretically be incorporated into movements. I think we should have militant opposition, and I think there are ways to incorporate that responsibly, in a way that can grow the movement.

Libal also expressed concern over what he describes as the "nonconsensual element" associated with the use of political violent social protest tactics such as Black Blocs. Unlike Denton, though, he does not believe political violence has any place in the movements in which he participates.

MT: What do you think of violence on television by protesters and activists? Going back to Seattle in '99, for instance. Do you think that was bad or good?

BL: I think it was bad.

MT: You do think it was bad.

BL: It depends on what you mean by — yeah, I do. It's interesting, because I feel like ten years ago I probably would have not made that argument. If somebody came to a protest we put on, and granted… It's part of the beauty and the problems with anarchism, without structure. "It's everyone's protest!" I think that I kind of reject the whole argument now. I certainly think that there is a place for very confrontational protests. I also think that, now, if somebody showed up to a protest we were putting on and started breaking windows and stuff…

MT: You'd send them packing?

BL: Yeah. I mean, it feels weird to say that. But I do think people have obligations to think about things.

MT: Would that matter less, though, if you weren't getting media coverage?

BL: Yeah, totally. Yeah, absolutely. Sure.

MT: Is there any room at all for violence being maybe a net good thing for movements and movement builders? Violence on television or in print or on YouTube?

BL: I was going to say I think that the whole idea of diversity of tactics, which is the sort of mantra of anarchists in '99 and after — "you can't tell me what to do, we have a diversity tactics" — I think there's a very nonconsensual element to that. But, do we agree that in this space we're going to do something together? I don't want to be a part of something where my message, and my speech, is going to be conflated with something that I completely disagree with — or not, but I think it's inappropriate in the moment.

MT: Something that might overshadow what you're doing.

BL: Yeah, absolutely, which I think happened in Seattle, probably. At the same time, I feel like I'm not involved in that at all. I think that's not happening anymore, really, that kind of anarchist-driven protest. For instance, I think that in a few places in some of the immigrants' rights marches, there's been Black Bloc anarchists who have broken windows during these protests. And I think that's total bullshit. If you weren't involved in the organizing of something at all, and you're not affected by the policies that people are trying to change, and if you get arrested you're not getting deported, but the person next to you is, you're a dick. But I am more familiar with a spectrum of actions that are happening, and very radical actions that are meaningful, as in the immigrant rights movement, where they're from legislative work that isn't even protest-oriented, to legislative work that bleeds into protests, to mainstream symbolic civil disobedience, to people locking themselves in front of deportation buses and physically stopping deportations, to people purposefully getting arrested, infiltrating detention centers and organizing people inside of immigration detention, to people organizing people in Mexico to cross back into the United States as a form of civil disobedience, getting arrested at the border, facing criminal charges, and then making legal claims that they should be able to stay, and then getting all this media, this "bring them home campaign. That's a gutsy, radical, political act to me. And it's dependent on the media in some ways. People build media campaigns around these people's stories.

Tommy also dismissed radical leftists' criticisms of political violence, on the grounds that these critics seek to maintain order. However, he also believes that white radicals who use political violence run the risk of coopting the struggles of people of color, which carries racist implications.

> MT: When Black Bloc anarchists break windows or commit other acts of property destruction, they're often painted in a bad light by the media. And often, there's a response from the left, even from sort of Old Left orientation anarchists, that this is bad in some way. I probably don't need to tell you what those critiques are, because I'm sure you've read them. What do you think of those responses? Like, the people who were down on the protesters in Seattle who threw bricks through the Starbucks windows?
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> T: Fuck 'em. All of those people. I think that's where hostility towards journalists comes from, right, is because you know that when…
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> MT: No, there were people on the left saying this, too. In anarchist journals and such.
>
> T: Okay, yeah. Anyone who seeks to put the brakes on something, anyone who has the correct way of acting, I think is totally on the side of maintaining order. … Generally, I think it's the most reactionary bullshit. … Sometimes, there are critiques that I think are worth making. Sometimes it's not appropriate.
>
> MT: Such as? When might it not be appropriate?
>
> T: I think if you and your crew of white anarchist kids roll on up to a Ferguson solidarity demo in your town, and you're setting the tone for the demonstration, that's probably inappropriate.
>
> MT: What about that makes it inappropriate?
>
> T: I think that everyone has super legitimate reasons to be against the police. But I think if you are white, your reasons to be against the police are usually a decision. You are not forced to revolt because of your material conditions. You do not walk through the world with the imminent threat of being murdered by the police. So, in a very real sense, it's not about white kids. I think there are real ways that white anarchists can be in solidarity with black and brown youth, or black and brown folks generally who are against the police, but I think our reasons for being against the police are super different. They're connected, but they're different. I think that if you show up to a demo and are just trying to push your own agenda, I

> think that's making it about you and making it about your agenda, and it's not connecting with other people in a genuine way around their struggle. It's an attempt to co-opt their struggle and make it about your version of whatever anarchist politics you have. And I think that that's racist.

UNDERSTANDINGS OF POLITICAL ECONOMY AND MEDIA HEGEMONY

Although it seems reasonably clear that critical political economy and framing theory inform how crow, Denton, and Libal think about the informational power of the mass news media, none of the anarchists I spoke with invoked Gramsci's idea of hegemony or indicated any deep familiarity with this concept. Nevertheless, Tommy articulated an insightful, prescient, anti-vanguardist critique of hegemony during our interview, which dovetails with the arguments concerning hegemony articulated by Adam Przeworski (1986), James C. Scott (1985), and Richard Day (2005), discussed in Chapter 5, namely, that (1) there may be important material factors which explain why people choose not to engage in resistance efforts and (2) the idea of building a counterhegemonic mass movement is suspect, or at least from an anarchist strategic standpoint. Tommy began by noting that he had come to a realization that traditional, reformist methods were inadequate to the task of dismantling civilization itself.

> T: I read Derrick Jensen and people who, instead of naming capitalism, are naming civilization, this thing that has been around much longer, as the thing that needs to go, and feel like the traditional, reformist methods of activism just aren't going to cut it for that.
>
> MT: Reformist methods such as?
>
> T: Just… movement building. Just mass movement building appealing to the radical as the person who views themselves as possessing a certain kind of consciousness that they are trying to spread to…
>
> MT: Like the agents of change?

T: Yeah, the specialists in social change. I'm sort of becoming a little bit dispelled, or feeling burned by that process, you know, trying to do these things and being confronted with a bunch of people who just don't care. And being like, "Okay, that's interesting."

MT: When you say 'people', what do you mean?

T: The people that activists try to reach out to, or organize, or have participate in their thing, who just don't care.

MT: So, like a non-activist audience?

T: Yeah, people who just live their lives, rather than try to confront power. Or not even confront power, but try to speak to it. Or whatever.

MT: Why do you think it is that people don't care, though?

T: I mean, I don't care. It's usually not fun. It feels like a sacrificial thing to do. It takes effort. It's not usually very rewarding. People don't think it works, which it doesn't, really. I feel like there's a million reasons why generally people aren't interested. Their everyday lives are so much more important, so unless you have really tangible ways in which your movement or whatever political project, unless you have a really tangible and obvious way that that can enhance somebody's life, usually materially, people aren't going to care. And I'm the same way. If something isn't stimulating, if something isn't up in the air, if it's just the same predictable show up, speak truth to power, have power ignore you, go home, try harder next time, I'm not interested either, you know? And I feel like that's generally the model of people who are trying to build these revolutionary movements from the ground up. They show up to different moments where people might be galvanized around a particular issue, and try to channel that energy into their own particular thing. The problem is that there's like a million of those people, with different particular things. You have the ISO, and you have the anarchists, and it's just like… If you're normal person to might be motivated to leave their house for that one particular issue, and you show up, you're just like, "Oh my God, I feel like I'm a buffet and everyone's trying to capture my energy." I think people are right to be suspicious of it. People are right to not care. You get burned enough, you try hard, and then it doesn't work, and you do that enough times, and you sort of give up. You're sort of like, "Okay, this isn't working." It doesn't mean that I don't still indict all of society as being terrible, but it does mean that we need to think about what we're doing totally differently.

MT: Do you have that same feeling, that attitude about the movements themselves, though?

T: I think movements are really interesting.

MT: How hard are you on the movements?

T: I'm less hard on the movements and more hard on the people who would manage them. I think that generally, radicals and politicians of all stripes seek to capture the unpredictable energy of moments. To take the recent wave of anti-police demonstrations across the country, there's this sort of unpredictable energy that a lot of people just have. It's just antagonism toward the police. It seems like it's always the radicals who show up and are like, "Cool, join my thing. This is how we have to do it." It's always telling people what to do. It's always putting the brakes on, as opposed to trying to maintain that unpredictable space, trying to make it so that whoever can express themselves however it is that they are deciding to do it. It's usually the movement builders and the radicals who [instead] are trying to channel that energy into their particular program, and that is what I am particularly hostile toward.

VIEWS ON THE ROLE OF ALTERNATIVE MEDIA

Four of the five anarchists I spoke with indicated that alternative media was important, but crow rejected the underlying assumption of an alternative/mainstream dichotomy. He believes activists should create their own media, but interprets this very broadly.

MT: Broadly, what role do you see for alternative media?

sc: I want you to clarify what is alternative media.

MT: I will let you clarify that.

sc: Well, I don't think there is alternative media. It just is media.

MT: When you say we create our own media, though…

sc: Right, but what's the 'we' in that? I think that we create our own media everywhere. If you're into co-ops and communes, there's a whole media world for you. If you're anarchist identified, then there's a whole world of media for you. If you're a liberal lefty, then there's a whole world of media for you. If you're a right-wing conservative, there's a whole media world for you. These are broad

strokes. I just want to clarify that. I don't think there is alternative media. I think there is just media.

The remaining four anarchists, who accepted the alternative/mainstream binary, offered opinions. Deller, for instance, cautioned that although alternative media can be important, some alternative media run the risk of capitalist recuperation.

MT: How do you think about activist, or alternative, or radical media—however you want to think about it—as it relates to these issues we're talking about?

AD: When I think of more radical types of media, I think of Indymedia, Infoshop, people on Tumblr, people on Twitter, people who are on the ground or really in the thing. And I think of AnarchistNews.org. I think those outlets are great. I think they talk about the things I want to be hearing about, and they talk about things in a way that is less commodifiable. …

MT: What role do you see for alternative media?

AD: I don't really know. For right now, I think it's in a really cool position, where a lot can happen really quickly and I think it has the potential to keep doing that, and keep being the thing that keeps mass media in check. It's so different from mass media that it's providing something that is potentially more honest or truthful. But I also see it as being a thing that can still be assimilated or rehabilitated into capitalism. Everything is potentially commodifiable, and that's the problem.

Denton, as mentioned earlier, supports alternative media and believes it has an important role to play in social movements. For Denton, a vibrant alternative media and a strong, organized left presence in the United States have a shared fate.

MT: What role do you see for alternative media? What role would you like it to have? This is a meta-activism question.

MD: I think it's indispensable for a better world. For movements, especially for long-term movements, if there's going to be a left in the U.S., which there really isn't right now, alternative media has to be part of that. There needs to be a left for there to be a vibrant alternative media. But I think just as much there needs to be a vibrant alternative media in order to have any sort of left that has any chance of winning, because we need a mass movement. So, we need sources where people can go and not be deluded, and not be disempowered, distracted, and individualized. And where people can find a different way of looking at the

> world, compatible with the way we see the world, and how that informs why we're building movements.

For Libal, traditional forms of alternative media, such as magazines like *Z Magazine* and *In These Times*, do not carry the same significance as they used to. Online alternative media are more appealing to him.

> MT: … a question I'm interested in … is what role for alternative media for those of us who care about organizing and activism in the twenty-first century?
>
> BL: I actually think that there is more room, in some ways, because of — I think there's less room in print, obviously. *Left Turn* doesn't publish anymore, you know. But I think that, for instance, *Colorlines* is relevant and I actually actively reach out to them on some stories. A lot of – *Latino Rebels*, you know. And there's even new cables, like Fusion, which is an ABC/Univision thing. There's more niche media, and some of that is alternative and activist based. The Observer, I think, is actually – maybe it's just because I know so many people who write there — but I think it's transitioned in a way that it's relevant. I see it. I see it on social media, and I see it in the world, whereas I don't see things like *Z Mag* or *In These Times*.
>
> MT: As being relevant, or you just don't see them?
>
> BL: I literally don't see them. I literally don't think I've seen anyone post an article from *Z Mag* on Facebook, and I don't think MonkeyWrench gets *Z Mag* anymore. It doesn't exist to me anymore. I don't go to the website of my own.

Tommy believes that most radical alternative media have hit an impasse, and that even the most adventurous publications "are scraping the barrel" in their attempts to share new ideas that can spur radical imaginaries. During our interview, I mentioned that over the past few years, I noticed MonkeyWrench Books, the anarchist bookstore he works with, has stopped carrying several prominent alternative publications, such as *Z Magazine*, *Monthly Review*, *In These Times*, and others. "No one reads them. They're just not interesting," he says. However, he spoke positively about the propaganda efforts of CrimethInc., which is an anarchist collective that has produced and distributed hundreds

of thousands of widely read books and pamphlets promoting anarchism over the past two decades.

> MT: It's interesting that, when you talk about propaganda, there is no obvious goal for the propaganda. You're just going to throw it out there and kind of see what happens. When I've talked to other anarchists who use the word 'propaganda', they're talking about it more in this "war of ideas" sense — media is a battleground or whatever. That's not what you have in mind at all, right?
>
> T: No, no.
>
> MT: It's not that. What about other alternative media? … What about stuff like Z Magazine, In These Times, or Left Turn?
>
> T: It might be interesting if those things had interesting politics, but they don't, in my opinion. They're wacky.
>
> MT: Are there publications or journals that actually craft arguments, that aren't just propaganda, that resonate with you? That matter? Earlier, you mentioned CrimethInc.
>
> T: … The reason I mention CrimethInc. is they have a new project. They're printing some enormous number of a new anarchist primer as this fucking global intervention. That's really ambitious. They're seeing what they're doing as this thing that's maybe similar to the battleground of ideas, but more in a sense they're trying to — because I think that that is true. … I don't know how much ideas matter compared to other things, but sometimes they do. Sometimes they do matter. I don't know what material effect propaganda has. It is clear that it has some effect. It is unclear whether…
>
> MT: It seems like it's hard to print thousands of copies of something, which is an investment of time and money and energy and all these things, without having any sense of what effect it will have, though, right? How does one commit to that?
>
> T: It's an experiment.
>
> MT: But throwing that much spaghetti at the wall takes a lot of resources, right?

T: [Laughs] It does take a lot. CrimethInc just did a huge Kickstarter.* They have the resources. I think it's fucking bold. For whatever you have to say about CrimethInc.'s politics, and I haven't read the primer yet, but CrimethInc. has had a fucking material effect in the United States.

MT: They're probably the most visible anarchist presence in North America.

T: Visible and consistent. Of course, I have my critiques, but they are refreshing. They do things in a way that I think is bold and new and in the spirit of experimentation. If you have the resources, then why the fuck not? Again, it's that question of, "How do we push? How do we try harder? How do we try a new thing?" And your experiments fail, but it seems to me that they're always worth it. Do something weird and see what happens. If you're just trying the same thing that you tried forever, if you're still screaming on that same soapbox and no one's listening, they aren't going to start listening.

* See http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/crimethinc/to-change-everything. In 2014, CrimethInc. raised over $22,000 on the crowdfunding website to produce and distribute their anarchist primer, To Change Everything: An Anarchist Appeal

Chapter 8: Discussion and Further Research

This dissertation did not have a well-defined body of anarchist media studies to use as a foundation when I set out to answer, "What might an anarchist media theory look like?" This required me, in Chapter 2, to construct an account of news media power rooted in anarchist thought and practice, drawing inspiration from writings by anarchists and fellow travelers, critical media scholars, and writers working in science and technology studies. In Chapter 3, I critically examined the politics of academic communications research, in order to situate anarchist media theorizing and research within the field. Following this, in Chapter 4 I sketched three important conceptions of news media vis-à-vis activists and social movements—i.e., media as site of struggle, media as adversary to activists and movements, and media as tools and resources that activists can use or harness—to use as a backdrop for discussion in later chapters. In Chapter 5, in order to explore how anarchism challenges, modifies, and denaturalizes notable critical media theories—framing, the dominant ideology thesis, media hegemony, and political economy—I reconstructed these theories, teased out their strategic implications for activists and social movements, and assessed these perspectives and their strategic implications from an anarchist point of view. Finally, I conducted in-depth interviews with anarchists and other activists to gather their perspectives on these and other issues, covered in Chapters 6 and 7.

Chapters 2 through 5 address this dissertation's main research question in broad strokes, whereas the exploratory interview research component in Chapters 6 and 7 represents a first step at putting descriptive meat on theoretical bones. The results of this theory-building project were startling: Where I expected to find that an anarchist account of news media might look something like an admixture of critical media concepts and

theories such as political economy, instead I found that anarchism offers a distinct alternative to popular, established critical media perspectives. Anarchist media theorizing is a useful way to generate low theoretical arguments or concepts related to news media power, media-movement interactions, and academic scholarship about these topics. This dissertation's attempt to help close the gap between critical communications research and radical activist practice shows that there are indeed important features of an anarchist account of news media, discussed below.

CRITIQUE OF CORRUPT INFORMATIONAL POWER

The first—and arguably most important—defining feature of anarchist media theory is its critique of corruptions of information power, which is a logical extension of anarchism's critique of various forms of domination, authority, and hierarchy. As noted in Chapter 2, anarchists tend to default to a critical political economy perspective such as Ed Herman and Noam Chomsky's (1988/2002) propaganda model when critiquing the mass news media, as evidenced by the Anarchist FAQ (McKay 2008). And in fact, it could be argued that contemporary anarchism's account of power and hierarchy is fundamentally in agreement with the critique of mass news media advanced by political economist theorists such as Chomsky, Herman, and Robert McChesney. However, this dissertation suggests that from an anarchist perspective, the political economy tradition offers at best a partial understanding of corruptions of informational power. For example, the propaganda model fails to capture or adequately explain how regimes of domination such as white supremacy and patriarchy work to corrupt the informational power of mass news media systems. This is because the critical political economy tradition is concerned, somewhat narrowly, with state-corporate corruptions of informational power.

Although the anarchist critique of corruptions of information power encompasses a critique of state-corporate influence, it also draws attention to other forms of power and realities of oppression. For anarchist media theory, then, state-corporate power should not be the main object of analysis; nor should culture, white supremacy, patriarchy, and so on. Rather, power itself is the focus of critique. This indicates room for analytical growth and suggests that anarchists and other, likeminded radicals ought to broaden their horizons when assessing the problem of mass news media power.

CRITIQUE OF COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

The second defining feature of anarchist media theory is that it challenges rather than uncritically accepts the influence of communications technologies as inevitable or natural, which also is consistent with the anarchist critique of domination and hierarchy. As argued in Chapter 2, communications technologies are hardly neutral; they can activate and spread resistance, but ultimately serve to reinforce or reproduce regimes of domination such as capitalism. This point is especially relevant in the context of advanced capitalist societies such as the United States, where activists and citizens rely heavily on digital communications technologies for outreach and engagement. This suggests that anarchists and other radicals should be sensitive to the dilemmas posed by activist use of these technologies, as well as look for ways to incorporate communications technologies into their activism in ways that subvert their social control functions.

NON-HIERARCHICAL, WIDESPREAD PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNICATION

A third defining feature of anarchist media theory is that it rejects the corporate structure of mass news media and values, instead, nonhierarchical media organizational

forms, as well as communications practices that enable direct information flows. An anarchist account of news media also places a premium on widespread participation in the process of making meaning. This reflects anarchism's commitment to liberty, autonomy, and direct action as a form of prefigurative politics. From an anarchist perspective, not only should media organizations and practices be consistent with nonhierarchical modes of social organization, but these organizations and practices ought to be open to anyone who wishes to participate in communicative activity. This means that anarchist media theory challenges the current media system premised on the professionalization of journalists, which restricts participation in meaning making to a small handful of people, who typically report on events from the perspective of the state and capital.

COMMITMENT TO RESISTANCE AND STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

A fourth defining feature of an anarchist account of news media is that it draws attention to activists' ethical-political commitments and how these influence or shape the ways in which activists approach questions related to media activism and social movement tactics and strategy. This includes issues related to activists' engagement with the mass news media, issues related to the creation of alternative or activist media, and questions concerning how activist researchers ought to approach inquiry into these matters. Unlike some critical media perspectives, an anarchist account of news media places a premium on resistance and rejects theories which deny the possibility of resistance. In addition to emphasizing mass news media's adversarial roles (e.g., its role in suppressing activists), an anarchist media theory also draws attention to two other important dimensions of news media: its role as a site of struggle and as tools or

resources that activists, dissidents, and radicals can use. That is, anarchist media theory does not simply offer a critique of news media power; it also carries radical political implications.

Anarchist media theory considers it necessary to evaluate critical media theories according to how well they explain aspects of social-political reality, but also on the basis of their strategic implications. Theoretical ideas ought to be of interest to activists, instead of academic research divorced from struggle. This feature of anarchist media theory sets it apart from most other notable critical media perspectives. Critical media theories that admit of no strategic implications, such as the dominant ideology thesis, are of limited use to activists, and possibly worthless from an anarchist media theory perspective. Furthermore, strategic implications ought to be concomitant with anarchist thought and practice. It is clear, for instance, that anarchist media theory is deeply at odds with Marxist accounts of dominant ideology and hegemony; even though these perspectives draw attention to the corruptions of information power, their strategic implications and underlying ethical-political commitments to vanguardist solutions are out of step with anarchist thought and practice. This finding is especially notable, because it indicates that anarchist media theory very clearly offers an anti-Leninist, anti-Orthodox Marxist, but still radical anti-capitalist approach to theorizing about news media power and media-movement interactions. It also suggests that activists should pay close attention to critical media studies that actually do promote progressive policy changes, such as the work of political economists like Robert McChesney.

Together, these features distinguish an anarchist account of news media from other critical media theoretical perspectives. If these features appear mundane, it is worth remembering that anarchism, again, does not lend itself to high theory, and that no other

study has explicitly connected these dots. Making these linkages is this dissertation's main contribution.

DISCUSSION OF INTERVIEW RESEARCH FINDINGS

Although the findings from this study's exploratory ethnographic interview research are not meant to represent all or most anarchists' beliefs about news media, they do indicate that some of the major theoretical arguments contained in this dissertation accurately reflect how some anarchists think about news media. These interviews have important unifying themes. First, although anarchists hold differing views of news media power and appropriate media strategies and tactics, their views on these topics are all informed by a desire to live in a freer, less repressive world.

Second, anarchists hold strong adversarial conceptions of news media, but generally speaking, do not believe activists should completely rule out mass media engagement. With the exception of Tommy, who generally found questions related to mass news media to be fairly uninteresting, the remaining four anarchists I interviewed expressed concern over what I describe as corruptions of information power. Although Alyse Deller's views, which come very close to a dominant ideology thesis understanding of news media, could arguably be characterized as out of step with the anarchist account of news media sketched in this dissertation, it was clear that scott crow, Marcus Denton, and Bob Libal viewed news media in terms of a site of struggle and as tools or resources. The interviewees' responses indicate that, in an important sense, contemporary anarchist activists are in fact organically pragmatic thinkers on the issue of activist engagement with the institutions of mass news media.

Third, some anarchists believe the image in which the press casts them is irrelevant as long as it provides visibility to radical political activity. This clicks with the theoretical argument that deprecatory media depictions of activists' political violence can, somewhat paradoxically, actually benefit activist groups and movements.

However, I did find it odd that most of the anarchists I spoke with believed the mass media exerted an especially strong influence on media audiences, a view which I consider to be out of step with an anarchist understanding of news media, as well as most academic research on this topic. I believe there are two reasons for this. One, my view of anarchism is idiosyncratic, because it is influenced in some important degree by autonomist Marxism and a familiarity with audience reception theory. As noted in Chapter 2, though, this idiosyncrasy is unavoidable. Second, it is possible that anarchists and other activists hold such beliefs about news media, simply because most activist literature on media has hit a creative plateau by not engaging with academic writings on this subject. Yet, as I have argued, academic writings on mass media and communications challenge several assumptions activists may hold. The range of opinions I encountered also indicates that there is a fairly blurred line separating anarchists from other radical leftists. This hints at the possibility that anarchistic ideas about media may have wide influence in left-progressive circles – a topic I intend to explore in the future, by examining the transcripts of the remaining eleven interviews.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This dissertation contributes to the burgeoning field of anarchist studies by opening the door to several lines of inquiry. Like Marxism, anarchism can bring to critical media studies "*a ruthless criticism of everything existing*, ruthless in two senses:

The criticism must not be afraid of its own conclusions, nor of conflict with the powers that be" (Marx 1843/1978, p. 13; emphasis in original). At the same time, this work has important limitations. For example, even though about a third of the activists I reached out to for interviews were people of color, most of those who consented to be interviewed—14 of 16—were white. An important next step to expand inquiry and theorizing on this topic is simply to include diverse views from anarchists and other radicals. Such a project ought to gather perspectives from anarchists in different geographic regions, because different anarchist tendencies are better represented in different states. For example, arguably anarcho-communists hold more sway in northeastern states, whereas insurrectionist anarchists are more commonly found in the Bay Area of California.

In addition, writing a doctoral dissertation or any other major academic work requires the researcher to commit a significant amount of time and resources in order to see it through to completion. For the PhD student in the neoliberal university, with few resources to support its graduate students, there is intense pressure to finish quickly and graduate. In the process of formulating, researching, and writing this manuscript, I reluctantly had to scale back my original, more ambitious proposal, which included, among other things, an in-depth examination of each ethnographic interview. Another important limitation, arguably, is that this dissertation is written primarily for an academic audience. Although it is reflexive in the sense that it assesses its ethical-political bases, it also fails to be reflexive in the sense that I did not ask my interview subjects to read over chapter drafts during the initial research and writing process, which I probably would have done were this not a doctoral dissertation.

The next step in my research process will be to reorganize this dissertation's contents into journal articles, examine theoretical perspectives I could not cover—such as

agenda-setting theory, feminist studies, and critical race theory—and delve deeper into the interview data that I collected for this study. I intend to add another dimension of reflexivity to this work, by soliciting feedback from my interview subjects and other activists as part of the process.

Appendix: Interview Script

Background

1. What is your name? Can you please spell it? May I ask for your contact information, in case I have follow up questions? (Identify age/gender as well.)
2. Can you describe what brought you to activism? Do you identify politically as anything?
3. What groups or causes do you work with?
4. Can you talk about their goals and strategies?
5. Do you think they reach those goals? Are their strategies successful?

Sense of theory

1. Do the ends justify the means? (Are the means and ends the same?)
2. Do you think people basically make their own decisions about how to live their lives? Why do you think people do what they do?
3. Do you think people are partly responsible for their own problems?
4. Do you and your friends (comrades, allies) share the same values? Where do you think those values come from?
5. In general, what do you think of mass news media?
6. What effect do you think mass news media has on people?

Media use

1. Where do you get your news?
2. What kinds of news do you typically watch or read?
3. Do you use any digital technologies (cell phones, Twitter, etc.) in your activism?

Working with mass news media

1. How do you think about commercial/mainstream media as it relates to activism and/or social change? How do you approach it?
2. Does your group use mainstream media in its strategies? In what way(s)?
3. If you're trying to reach an audience through your activism, what kind of audience do you have in mind?
4. How do you know whether you've reached that audience?
5. Can you describe a successful media strategy or campaign your organization used?
6. What about an unsuccessful one?
7. What influence do these activities have?
8. Do you think it is worthwhile for activists to use mainstream media?
9. What role do you see for mainstream media?

Working with activist/alternative media

1. How do you think about activist or alternative media as it relates to activism and/or social change?
2. Does your group use alternative or activist media in its strategies? In what ways?
3. If you're trying to reach an audience, what kind of audience is it?
4. How do you know whether you've reached that audience?
5. Can you describe a successful media strategy or campaign your organization used?
6. What about an unsuccessful one?
7. What influence do these activities have?
8. Do you think it is worthwhile for activists to use activist or alternative media?

9. What role do you see for alternative media?
10. If you read or create alternative media, how do you think about mainstream media's influence on alternative media?.

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